
JESUS NEVER LIVED!

VOLUME 2

JESUS AND PLATO ON HELL

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Laurence E. Dalton

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Volume 2 Jesus and Plato on Hell

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Laurence E. Dalton and Shirley Strutton Dalton

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In our previous book, *Jesus Never Lived!* Volume 1 *Jesus Christ: A Pagan Myth (3rd expanded edition)*, of this series on the origins of Christianity we dealt with the pagan roots of Christianity.

Part one of Volume 2 deals with how the New Testament viewed the salvation of Christians and non-Christians. Part two shows the similarity between Plato and the Christians as regard the hereafter. We close the book with an excursus on the views of Christianity by Thomas Jefferson.

PART 1

What Saves Christians? Faith and Good Deeds? Bloody Sacrifices?

What did the Stoics believe would save them? What did Christians think would save them?

CHAPTER 1 DO GOOD DEEDS ALONE SAVE?

JESUS AND OTHERS:

For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. Mt 16.27

For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. Mt 5.20

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled. Mt 5.6

And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life. Jn 5:29

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal. Mt 25:46

The Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work. What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? James 2:14, 17, 20, 24, 26

I will give unto every one of you according to your works. Rev 2:23

Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work. Rev 22:12

PAUL:

Who will render to each one according to his deeds. ... For not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified. Rom 2.6, 13

And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just. Rom 3.8

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. 2 Cor 5:10

Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works. 2 Cor 11:15

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Gal 5.19-21

STOICS ON GOOD DEEDS ALONE

(In) some sort or another we are all of us wicked....
Seneca, *On Benefits* 14

Nor do I speak only of those that do not live up to the strict rule of virtue; but mankind itself is degenerated and lost. Seneca, *On Benefits* 19

Let every man retire into himself; for the old, the young, men, women, and children, they are all wicked ...there is a general conspiracy in evil. Mankind is entered into a

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sort of confederacy against virtue: to say nothing of intestine wars, fathers and sons in league against one another, poisoned fountains, troops in search of the banished and proscribed, prisons crammed with worthy men, cities demolished, rape and adultery authorized, public perjuries and frauds, a violation of common faith ... and all the bonds of human society cancelled.
Seneca, *Epistle 15*

But who can look for gratitude in an age of so many gaping and craving appetites, where all people take, and none give? In an age of license to all sorts of vanity and wickedness, as lust, gluttony, avarice, envy, ambition, sloth, insolence, levity, contumacy, fear, rashness, private discords and public evils, extravagant and groundless wishes, vain confidences, sickly affections, shameless impieties, rapine authorized, and the violation of all things, sacred and profane: obligations are pursued with sword and poison; benefits are turned into crimes....Seneca *On Benefits 19*

Using reason humans can achieve virtue (moral goodness) before they die. ... It is agreed upon at all hands, "That right reason is the perfection of human nature," and wisdom only the dictate of it. Seneca, *On the Happy Life*

A wise man, in what condition what so ever he is, will be still happy; for he subjects all things to himself, because he submits himself to reason, and governs his actions by counsel, not by passion. Seneca *On the Happy Life*

Virtue (moral goodness) alone brings secure and perpetual joy. Seneca *On the Happy Life*, xx, 5.

When we come once to value our flesh above our honesty, we are lost.... Seneca *On the Happy Life*

DO GOOD DEEDS ALONE SAVE?

Virtue is that perfect good, which is the complement of a happy life Seneca *On the Happy Life*

It is wrong to say that a good man may be overcome; and then to imagine that anything shameful can befall him. Seneca *On Benefits*

The perfect man, full of divine and human virtues, can lose nothing: his (ethical) goods are guarded by solid and unshakable walls. Seneca, *On Constancy*, vi, 8.

CHAPTER 2 DO FAITH AND GOOD DEEDS SAVE? FAITH ALONE? DO BLOODY SACRIFICES SAVE?

FAITH AND GOOD DEEDS?

The methods of salvation listed below seem to be aimed at the Stoics, among others. Stoics believed that works alone saved. This philosophy was highly influential on early Christianity. Some NT passages indicate that good works alone save. This humanistic philosophy was hard to defeat since the Christian ethic was essentially drawn from the Stoics (minus Hell and Heaven).

However, if good works plus faith in Jesus are necessary for salvation, then Christianity must be the exclusive vehicle of salvation. The same thing is true with the belief that faith alone in Jesus is the key to salvation. For the Christian, Judaism and Stoicism would be invalid.

DO FAITH AND GOOD WORKS SAVE?

James and Peter:

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?
James 2:14

Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.
James 2:17

But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? James 2:20

Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. James 2:24

DO FAITH AND GOOD DEEDS SAVE?

For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. James 2:26

And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.... 1 Pet 1.17

Jesus:

In the teachings of Jesus in the gospels, good works is often equated with repentance and forgiveness of sins.

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shall call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. Mt 1.21

From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent (of your sins): for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Mt 4:17

They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. ... I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Mt 9.12-13

And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. [Sin causes sickness.] Mt 10:1

DOES FAITH ALONE SAVE?

Jesus:

And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood (for) twelve years.... [Physicians had not been able to heal her, but by touching Jesus' garment she believed she would be healed and she was. Eds.]. And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague. Mk 5.25-29, 34

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Sickness is caused by sin but if you have enough faith in Jesus you can be cured.

Whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Jn 3:16

He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. Jn 3:18, 36

Like other passages, here Jesus seems to be offering the hope of immortality which implies that the soul is not naturally immortal. Apparently at least some evil people simply perish, that is, are annihilated.

Paul and Others:

Like Jesus, Paul offers a number of ways to be saved.

Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also.... Rom 3:27.29

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. Rom 1.16

For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep (all of) the law: but if thou break (any) of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision [You are going to Hell]. Rom 2.25

DO FAITH AND GOOD DEEDS SAVE?

Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. Rom 3.20

For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. Rom 4.2

For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. Rom 4.13

Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression (sin). Rom 4:15

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.... Rom 5:1

For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. Rom 6.14

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Rom 6:23

But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. Rom 7.23-25

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. Rom 8.1-2

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So

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then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. Rom 8:7-8

For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. Rom 8:13-14 [No daughters?]

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God had raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. Rom 10:9

We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ even we [Jews] have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. Gal 2:15-16

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. Gal 2:20

But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. Gal 3:11-12

Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree: Gal 3:13

Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Gal 3:19

DO FAITH AND GOOD DEEDS SAVE?

For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. Eph 2.8-9

DO BLOODY SACRIFICES SAVE?

Jesus

But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Mt 9.13

But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless. Mt 12.7

[Jesus to his disciples at the Last Supper.] And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it: For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. Mt 26.26-28

In the two previous verses Jesus rejects sacrifices. But in this passage he indicates that a bloody sacrifice of himself is required for salvation. One who believes in and accepts the bloody crucifixion of Jesus will be saved from his/her sins.

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. 1 Cor 11:26-27

In some mystical way this cannibalistic communion strengthens the believer.

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Jewish Scriptures

For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice. Hosea 6.6.

Paul

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Rom 7: 24

In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.... Eph 1.7

Paul thinks that the only way to escape sin is through the sacrifice of God's son, Jesus, on the cross.

Pagans Condemning Sacrifices

"To what end then is it, if fate be inexorable, to offer up prayers, and sacrifices, any farther than to relieve the scruples and the weakness of sickly minds?" My answer is, first, That the gods take no delight in the sacrifices of beasts, or in the images of gold and silver, but in a pious and obedient will. Seneca

It is not the incense, or the offering, that is acceptable to God, but the purity and devotion of the worshipper
Seneca *On Benefits*

It was vain for them to sacrifice and offer gifts, seeing that they were hateful to the Gods, who are not, like vile usurers, to be gained by bribes. Plato, *Alcibiades*, ii, 149.

God is not worshipped by the slain bodies of bulls, nor by offerings of gold and silver, nor by the squandering of

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treasures, but by a pious and upright will. Seneca, *Letter cxv*, 5.

Why do we deceive ourselves? Our evil is not external: it is within us, in our very hearts; and so we shall hardly attain unto health, for we know not that we are sick. Seneca, *Epistle 1*, 4.

Fraud appears with the pleasant face of virtue, and a benignant countenance concealeth depraved thoughts. Seneca, *Fragments*, xcvi.

The idea is inconceivable that the Gods have regard, not to the justice and purity of our souls, but to costly processions and sacrifices. Plato, *Alcibiades II*, 150.

ON THE REJECTION OF ANCIENT ROMAN RELIGIOUS SACRIFICES:

The reader should note that the Roman religion of the masses was very, very superstitious. It is this that Paul and Jesus sometimes condemn. Among educated Romans these religious superstitions were rejected publicly. The atheistic Epicurean philosophers condemned popular religion, including sacrifices to the gods. The Stoics too, also rejected sacrifices to the gods. Thus, when Jesus and Paul condemn animal sacrifices, they do not display great courage, but reflect the surrounding culture.

Did Christians really reject sacrifice as a way to be saved?

SACRIFICE: RELIGION IN ANCIENT ROME

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Definition

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In Latin, the word *sacrificium* means the performance of an act that is *sacer*, sacred. Sacrifice reinforced the powers and attributes of divine beings, and inclined them to render benefits in return. Family meals, rites of passage, crops and livestock were ritually purified by vows, prayers, and sacrifices.

Animal Sacrifices

The most potent offering was animal sacrifice, typically of domesticated animals such as cattle, sheep and pigs. Each was the best specimen of its kind, cleansed, clad in sacrificial regalia and garlanded; the horns of oxen might be gilded. Sacrifice sought the harmonization of the earthly and divine, so the victim must seem willing to offer its own life on behalf of the community; it must remain calm and be quickly and cleanly dispatched.

The Sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross

Jesus and the Christians did not reject the biggest of all blood sacrifices (a human sacrifice, and the Son of God no less!).

In Mt 12.7 Jesus rejects sacrifices and yet Jesus has accepted God's plan that humans would be reconciled to God through the sacrifice of the Son of God on the cross.

"God so loved the world, that he gave his His only begotten Son" to be slaughtered – to save those who would convert to Christianity. Jn 3.16

THE PASSION

Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane

He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. Mt 26.42

DO FAITH AND GOOD DEEDS SAVE?

Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? Mt 26.53

Jesus' death must be seen as voluntary. The sacrificial animal "must seem willing to offer its own life on behalf of the community". He agrees with his father's command to be the sacrifice for many. He is "calm" and without fear.

The gods are inclined to render benefits in return.... In the case of Christ the Christian people were saved from their sins. Jesus, the son of God, will soon be sacrificed by God, his father, to save many from their sins, now that a ransom has been paid to save them.

Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. Mt 20.28

In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. Eph 1.7

In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sinsCol 1:14

"Sacrifice sought the harmonization of the earthly and divine ..." as Jesus reconciles God and humanity with his sacrifice on the cross.

Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Mt 26.64

Sacrifice reinforced the powers and attributes of divine beings.

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A sacrifice is a sacred act that increases the Strength of gods: The powers of the divine Jesus are reinforced, as in the future on the Judgment Day he will return triumphantly as the Son of Man. Mt 26.64

OTHER MEANS OF CHRISTIAN SALVATION

Does Jesus Save Through Spiritual Gifts?

And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. Mk 16.17-19

Jesus says to his disciples: Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give. Mt 10.8

And Jesus said unto (his disciples), If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say unto this mountain, Move hence to yonder place; and it shall move; and nothing shall be impossible to you. Mt 17.20

Paul

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. 1 Cor 12.1

Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same [Holy] Spirit. 1 Cor 12.4

For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; 1 Cor 12.8

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To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; 1 Cor 12.9

To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues 1 Cor 12.10

And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. 1 Cor 12.28

Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? 1 Cor 12.29-30

Follow after (love), and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may (preach). 1 Cor 14.1

I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all: Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue. 1 Cor 14.18-19

If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say ye are mad? 1 Cor 14.23

Sick people were cured by touching a handkerchief or apron of Paul. And the evil spirits left them. (Acts 19.12)

Prayer

Stoics

Nor does virtue dwell upon the tip of the tongue, but in the temple of a purified heart. Seneca *On a Happy Life*

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We prefer to invoke the Gods, to whom we make fitting supplication, silently and in our hearts. Seneca, *On Benefits*, ii, 1

The unholy do only waste ... much service upon the Gods. Plato, *Laws*, iv

We need not raise our hands to heaven, nor beseech the keeper to admit us to the ear of the image, as though thus we might be better heard; God is near thee, is with thee, is within thee. Seneca, *Letter xli*

When thou hast shut thy doors and darkened thy room, remember never to say that thou art alone. God is within, and thy genius is within; and what need have they of light to see what thou art doing? Epictetus, *Discourses*, i, 54

Cannot He who made and moves the sun perceive all things? Epictetus, *Discourses*, i, 54

All prayers are answered.

Jesus

And when thou pray, thou shall not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou pray, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which sees [what is secret] shall reward thee openly. Mt 6.5-6

Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not ... ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye

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shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive. Mt 21.21-22

All prayers are answered, except for those that are not.

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asks [will] receive; and he that seeks [will] find; and to him that knocks it shall be opened. Mt 7.7-8

But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen [pagans] do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. Mt 6.7-8

Jesus says, do not use long prayers. But then he adds that God knows what you need before you ask him. But if this is true why would you need to ask God? Jesus then gives the disciples The Lord's Prayer. Mt 6.9-13

Stoic

We ought not to pray at all, or we ought to pray in this simple and noble fashion. M. Aurelius v, 7.

Seneca on Prayers and Free Will vs Fate

Yes: Some blessings are freely given us; others upon our prayers are granted us: and every day brings forth instances of great and of seasonable mercies. Seneca

No: And, secondly, that by prayers and sacrifices dangers and afflictions may be sometimes removed; sometimes lessened; other(s)...deferred; and all this without any offence to the power or necessity of fate. There are some things ... even appearing evils may, upon our prayers and supplications, be turned into goods You will say, "That either this shall come to

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pass or not ... What if I should now grant you that there is a fate also even in our very prayers; a determination that we shall pray, and that therefore we shall pray?

Seneca states that one freely prays for something and God often grants the request. However, he then states that there is no conflict between free will and Fate since Fate (Nature or God) has determined that you will make that pray! Thus, fate causes all. But, of course, your will is not free if it is determined by fate or God. Seneca *Epistle 24*

Prayer: Healing the Sick

James

Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick James 5.14-15

Praying for rain

Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months(!) And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. James 5.17-18

Does Communion Save?

Eat Jesus' body and drink his blood.

Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. Jn 6:53-54

DO FAITH AND GOOD DEEDS SAVE?

Have faith in Jesus' blood.

God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood. Romans 3:25

Be saved by Jesus' blood.

Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. Romans 5:9

Does Faith and Baptism Save?

Believe and be baptized.

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. MK 16.16 (Baptism is added but not morally good works.)

Miscellaneous Ways to be Saved

Don't lust.

Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. James 1:15

Do the commandments and teach others to do them.

Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. Mt 5:19

Mortify the deeds of your body.

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If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. Rom 8:13

Do not sin.

Don't be an unrighteous fornicator, idolater, adulterer, effeminate, thief, covetous, drunkard, reviler, extortioner, or an abuser of yourself with mankind.

The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. 1 Cor 6:9-10

Love God and your neighbor.

He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. Lk 10:26-28

Believe Paul's Gospel.

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. 1 Cor 15:1-2

Obey Jesus.

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And [Jesus] being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him. Heb 5:9

And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. Acts 16.31

Don't get married.

They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage. Lk 20:35

Become a eunuch.

There be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it. Mt 19:12

Stay a (male) virgin.

...(T)he hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. Rev 14:4

Don't love your family more than Jesus.

He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Mt 10:37

Abandon your home and family for Jesus' name's sake.

And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or

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lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life. Mt 19:29, Mk 10:29-30, Lk 18:29-30

Hate your family.

If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. Lk 14:26

Don't hate your brother.

Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. 1 Jn 3:15

Don't hate the government.

The Lord knoweth how ... to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished: But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. 2 Pet 2:9-10

Don't resist the powers that be.

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. Rom 13:2

Don't fall away after you're saved.

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good

DO FAITH AND GOOD DEEDS SAVE?

word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance. Heb 6:4-6

Obtain mercy through Jewish unbelief.

For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through [Jewish] unbelief. Rom 11:30

God hath concluded them [the Jews] all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. Rom 11:32

Be an unbelieving Jew.

Even so have these [Jews] also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. Rom 11:31

Don't be a Jew.

But the children of the kingdom (Jews) shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Mt 8:12

Be saved by your spouse.

For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy. 1 Cor 7:14

For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife? 1 Cor 7:16

Don't love the world or the things in it.

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Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 1 Jn 2:15

Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. James 4:4

Don't get circumcised.

Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing ... ye are fallen from grace. Gal 5:2-4

Be poor, not rich.

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Mt 5:3

Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God. ... But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation. Lk 6:20, 24

Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. Mt 19:23-24

Ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. James 5:1

PART 2 THE PROBLEM OF EVIL.

CHAPTER 3 DIVINE PROVIDENCE. THE PROBLEM OF EVIL. EXCUSES FOR AN EVIL GOD.

Divine Providence

Both the Stoics and Christians shared a common belief, namely that God is all good. Only benefits flow from God to humanity. The Sun shines. Beneficial rains fall. All our needs are provided for by God. This is divine providence.

Jesus

Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much better than they?
Mt 6.26

And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Mt 6.28-29

Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Mt 6.30

God feeds only Christians?

Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Where withal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles (non-Christians) seek; for your heavenly Father knows that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Mt 6.31-33

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You will be fed unless you are a non-Christian? Christians starve to death just like others. About 30,000 died in Lisbon in 1755 due to an earthquake. Some theologians saw this as divine judgment. It cured Voltaire of the theodicy of Leibniz (all is for the best in this best of all possible worlds).

Pagan

Nature provides for all our needs not only for our necessities, but also for our pleasures, and for the gratifying of all our senses and appetites. So many pleasant groves; fruitful and salutary plants; so many fair rivers that serve us both for recreation, plenty, and commerce: vicissitudes of seasons; varieties of food, by nature made ready to our hands, and the whole creation itself subjected to mankind for health, medicine, and dominion. Seneca *Epistle 12*

Let us be liberal then, after the example of our great Creator, and give to others with the same consideration that he gives to us. Seneca *Epistle 12*

Give benefits to humans.

In the very methods of Nature we cannot but observe the regard that Providence had to the good of mankind, even in the disposition of the world, in providing so amply for our maintenance and satisfaction (Food, light, warmth and floods, illness, death, etc.) Seneca *Epistle 12*

There is not anything necessary to us but we have it either cheap or gratuitous: and this is the provision which our Heavenly Father hath made for us. Seneca, *On the Happy Life*, xv.

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Seneca teaches that you must benefit others, but this is hard to do if you don't acknowledge that things like starvation exist.

Must a philosopher be more helpless and anxious than the brute-beasts? each of which is self-sufficient, and wants neither proper food, nor any suitable and natural provision. Epictetus, *Discourses*, i, 35.

It is shameful that man should begin and end where the irrational creatures do. Epictetus, *Discourses*, i, 6.

But many animals and people starve or die of disease etc.

Does any good man fear that food shall fail him? It doth not fail the blind; it doth not fail the lame. Epictetus, *Discourses*, ii

Both good and bad people die of hunger, blind or not. Replacing reason with rationalizations to justify one's ethics is not philosophy.

Any one thing in creation is sufficient to demonstrate a Providence to a humble and grateful mind. Epictetus, *Discourses*, i, 16.

At least a mind that is seeking to provide evidence for an all good mother nature, which is in turn used to justify Stoic humanism.

Condemning the Godless

Here, Seneca condemns atheists and others who argue that God or Nature gives no benefits and so is not good, denying Divine Providence. The atheist, Epicurus, did not deny that the Cosmos gives us benefits as well as bad things like disease and death. He is merely arguing

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that Nature is neutral or indifferent as regard human beings. This is very much like the view of modern science.

Epicurus fancies God (gods) to be without power, and without arms; above fear himself, and as little to be feared. He places (them) betwixt the orbs, solitary and idle, out of the reach of mortals, and neither hearing our prayers nor minding our concerns; and allows him only such a veneration and respect as we pay to our parents.
Seneca *On Benefits* 12

Virtually nothing in Epicurus actually indicates that he believed in gods, impersonal or not. The references to deist type gods who were unaware of human existence were probably added by Epicurus or a later editor to help the Epicureans avoid the criminal charge of impiety from being leveled at them by the state.

Seneca

Unlike the personal God of the Christians, the Stoic God, Nature, is not a being that has consciousness. Is not Seneca contradicting himself? A moral act cannot be considered virtuous unless the giver consciously intends to benefit the receiver. But how can Seneca argue that nature gives us benefits when the Stoic God has no consciousness? Also, if Nature is all good, then humans would receive only benefits, life but no death, health but no disease, peace but no war.

The answer of the atheist, Epicurus, to this is that Nature gives no benefits at all, “but turns his back upon the world; and without any concern for us, leaves Nature to take her course. Whether he does anything himself, or nothing, he takes no notice, however, either of the good or of the ill that is done here below. If there were not an ordering and an over-ruling Providence,

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how comes it (say I, on the other side) that the universality of mankind should ever have so unanimously agreed in the madness of worshipping a power that can neither hear nor help us?"

Is the Roman philosopher kidding us? In Seneca's day people worshiped hundreds of good and bad gods as they do today. That does not mean that any of them exist, much less that they are beneficent, all good. As Seneca says elsewhere, truth is not determined by a vote.

These very men are so besotted as to imagine the world only to be governed by an unadvised rashness (chance), as if Nature knew not what she did. Seneca *Epistle 28*

Nature doesn't know what it is doing and referring to nature or God as she or as mother doesn't change the character of the blind force that governs the Universe.

Do we really want to argue like some Christians that God is good because he saved my child in an airplane crash that killed 50 other children? Natural laws are impersonal. They are forces not conscious beings. Pantheists believe that the Cosmos is God or Nature but the Stoics have personified it.

All (benefits), says Epicurus, (the atheist), we are to ascribe to Nature. And why not to God, I beseech ye? as if they were not both of them one and the same power, working in the whole, and in every part of it. [Maybe this is because Epicurus does not really believe there are gods and certainly none that are aware of human beings.] Or, if you call him the Almighty Jupiter; the Thunderer; the Creator and Preserver of us all; it comes to the same issue; some will express him under the notion of Fate; which is only a connection of causes, and himself the uppermost and original, upon which all

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the rest depend. The Stoics represent the several functions of the Almighty Power under several appellations. When they speak of him as the father and the fountain of all beings, they call him Bacchus: and under the name of Hercules, they denote him to be indefatigable and invincible; and, in the contemplation of him in the reason, order, to portion, and wisdom of his proceedings, they call him Mercury; ... he is everywhere, and fills his own work. ... As justice, integrity, prudence, frugality, fortitude, are all of them goods of one and the same mind, so that which so ever of them pleases us, we cannot distinctly say that it is this or that, but the (single) mind.

One God or Nature that has many names. Mind is a misleading term. Seneca does not believe in a conscious divine being as the Christians and Plato do. This mystical, religious language sometimes makes it difficult to understand the Stoics.

But, not to carry this digression too far ; that which God himself does, we are sure is well done; and we are no less sure, that for whatever he gives, he neither wants, expects, nor receives anything in return.... Seneca *On Benefits* 12

Seneca attributes this quote to the atheist, Epicurus, who would not have accepted the idea that the universe is God. Seneca's quote sounds more like an argument from Zeno, the pantheist and founder of Stoicism (ca 300 BC). Zeno, like the Stoics that followed him, had no problem with using the names of popular gods since he felt there was only one god with many names.

There never was yet any man so insensible as not to feel, see, and understand a Deity in the ordinary methods of nature, though many have been so

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obstinately ungrateful as not to confess it; nor is any man so wretched as not to be a partaker in that divine bounty. Seneca, *On Benefits* 12

Some of us are ungrateful to this indifferent universe including those who have watched a 10-year-old child die of cancer.

All our ingratitude, we see, does not turn Providence from pouring down of benefits, even upon those that question whence they come. Seneca, *On Benefits* 14

We have received benefits plus a good deal of pain and death “pouring down” on us. Is the insect that eats its mother alive before it is born a product of a beneficent God, an all good Nature?

What benefit can be great now to that man that despises the bounties of his Maker? We would be as strong as elephants, as swift as bucks, as light as birds; and we complain that we have not the sagacity of dogs, the sight of eagles, the long life of ravens, nay, that we are not immortal.... Nay, we take it ill that we are not gods upon earth; never considering the advantages of our condition, or the benignity of Providence in the comforts that we enjoy. Seneca, *On Benefits* 19

Except for a single passage in Seneca’s writings, the Roman philosopher gives no indication of a future life. As for the pain and suffering in this life, simply rationalizing that there is no real evil in the world is not the work of a philosopher. What happened to the quest of the early Ionian philosophers and the atomist, Democritus, to find objective truth? The Stoics, like the Christians, still use reason like Plato, but it is only used to justify beliefs which they already held prior to their “quest for the truth.” Plato already believed that the

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immortal soul was rewarded or punished after death, long before he wrote his dialogues.

Seneca does not buy into this Platonic thesis but he needs to find evidence for his humanistic ethic. Nature is all good and therefore we, as good humanists, should benefit humanity. All he has to do, like Christians, is to argue that cancer, parasites, deadly earthquakes and death are not really evil. Nature or God simply allows children to die so that we will all realize that suffering and death are simply neutrals and part of life.

But, somehow we feel that the killer at the Batman movie was not committing a morally neutral act. The Stoics would have been more admirable if they could have faced death without denying its evil. And Socrates and Christians would have been more admirable in the face of death if they did not deny that death really exists, since they believe we will live forever in the next world.

But in the end, death destroys all except for Christians who have found that Christ has conquered death or so Jesus and Paul tell us. The Stoics thought of death, as Shakespeare puts it, as the big sleep. It takes courage to face the truth.

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL.

Why would an all good, all powerful and all knowing God allow evil to exist?

Excuses for the Evil God

If God is all-powerful, all-good and all knowledgeable, why does God allow both Sin (murder, theft, war, etc.) and Natural Evil (death and disease, earthquakes, etc.) to exist in the world? Both Christians and Stoics were

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very concerned with what we call The Problem of the Evil God.

The Problem of Evil is not a difficult one to resolve. Evil exists but God is not all good or does not exist. What is difficult is providing excuses for an all good God that not only allows evil to exist but causes it to exist. If God exists, then God, Nature, Zeus or whatever you want to call it, is evil. The solution is simple, this God is evil or does not exist.

An all good, all powerful and all knowledgeable God would not suffer evil to exist. Satan is not a logical answer. Since Satan is not all-powerful, an all powerful God could extinguish him at any time. The second coming of the Savior who will put Satan in Hell is not logical. Why would not God send Jesus now? Also, an all good God would not have created the evil Angel in the first place.

But now let us turn to the excuses for the evil God.

Christians

In effect the Christians, like the Stoics and most mystics, answer that there is no evil. Sin is caused by humans or devils. Death is not evil. (Just convert and go to Heaven.) As for earthquakes, disease and other ills, God is teaching us like a parent teaches a child. We discipline the child to keep him from playing with matches. God causes some people to suffer so that others will learn how to deal with pain! If God allows our child to die, this is so we will learn humility, etc. After the Nazi death camps, some Christians taught that the Jews died so the Christians could learn moral lessons. As the reader will see in what follows, Stoics, like the Christians, offered horrendous reasons to justify the suffering and death of human beings.

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Jesus

But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this (life), houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. [Hell or Heaven.] Mk 10.30

This is really a bad argument. Why does not God get rid of evil in this world now? He is giving us time to repent and go to Heaven (or Hell)!

Paul

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Rom 6.23

So, sin causes disease and death, a stiff penalty provided by an all good and merciful God.

Other Christians

And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Rev 12.9

After we suffer and die, Satan will be defeated at the end times. That is a bit late. Why not defeat the devil now?

Why the good suffer: God is disciplining us.

For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourges every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Heb 12.6-8

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God, like a “loving” parent, teaches us by inflicting pain.

The Christians offered these bad arguments, as it was not possible for them to accept the idea that an all good God allows evil to exist.

The Stoics, like the Christians, answered that there is no real evil.

To make Nature, God or Reason all good the stoics had to argue that death and illness are neither good nor evil; they are merely neutrals or indifferents. The Stoics, worshippers of reason, thought it was necessary, to get rid of the problem of evil, to declare that even death is neither good nor evil; it is simply an indifferent, a neutral, like earthquakes, blue eyes or chocolate ice cream. God is just disciplining us like parents who punish their children in order to make them grow up to be good. But why was it so important to the Stoics to deny the existence of evil in this world? Because the fundamental argument of these humanists was that God or Nature is all good to us and therefore we should treat human beings in a like manner. The Stoic arguments for the absolute “goodness” of God were no better than those of the Christians. However, they were superior to the Christians in one way; they did not argue that eternal punishment awaits you after death, nor the boredom of heaven.

Stoics

The Gods like good parents who smile at their ill-natured children, cease not to heap benefits even on them who doubt the existence of their benefactors, but scatter their favours with equal hand among all nations. Seneca, *On Benefits*, vii, 31. [Including war and death.]

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To show now that the favors or the crosses of fortune, and the accidents of sickness and of health [or death], are neither good nor evil, God permits them indifferently both to good and evil men. Seneca

Pain, suffering and death are okay, provided that you apply them to evil people as well the good! If a plague kills a million people, some good and some bad, this is okay because their horrible deaths will make us realize that death and suffering are neither good nor evil!

God Is Hardening Us

"If there be a Providence, "say some," how comes it to pass that good men labor under affliction and adversity, and wicked men enjoy themselves in ease and plenty?" My answer is, that God deals by us as a good father does (with) his children; he tries us, he hardens us, and fits us for himself. Seneca

Fathers beat those sons in order to discipline them; therefore, God gives us contagious diseases, two headed babies, earthquakes and floods and deaths. One would think God would be more moral than mere humans.

Why Evil Men Prosper and the Good Suffer

Seneca

It is a common argument against the justice of Providence, in the matter of reward and punishment, "The misfortune of good men in this world, and the prosperity of the wicked;" but it is an easy matter to vindicate the cause of the gods. Man is kept in the world against his will; but adversity is the better for us all for it is God's mercy to show the world their errors....

Seneca

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So God gives us wars and plagues to show the world its moral errors.

(A wise man) is a friend to providence, and will not murmur at anything that comes to pass by God's appointment. Seneca

Blind faith or is it blind Reason?

What is poverty? No man lives so poor as he was born. What is pain? It will either have an end itself, or make an end of us. Seneca

Cute, but tell that to the parents of the starving kids of the world.

God is punishing us

When any hardship befalls us, we must look upon it as an act of Providence.... God chastises some people under an appearance of blessing them, turning their prosperity to their ruin as a punishment for abusing his goodness. Seneca

Teaching Others to Suffer

And we are further to consider, that many a good man is afflicted, only to teach others to suffer; for we are born for example.... Seneca *On A Happy Life* Ch 7

God is an amoral monster.

Final Christian and Stoic Answer: Shut up and obey God.

Jesus and Other Christians

Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. Acts 5.29

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Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.... Heb 5.8-9

As for the rest? Hell. Certainly this is most barbaric doctrine of Christianity but wait to you get to Divine Deception below.

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Mt 6.9-10

Obey

Pagan

We live unthankfully in this world, and we go struggling and murmuring out of it; dissatisfied with our lot (disease and death) ... and whenever it is the pleasure of God to call us (to die), we must obey Seneca, *On Benefits* 19

To lose a child or a limb, Philosophy instructs and advises us to obey God, and to follow him willingly Seneca *Epistle* 24

Great is the mind that is wholly subject to God. Seneca, *Letter* cvii, 12.

How can that man resign himself to God, or bear his lot, whatever it be, without murmuring, and cheerfully submit to Providence[virtue alone makes us] willing, knowing that whatever we suffer is according to the decree of Heaven. Seneca *On A Happy Life*

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Philosophy instructs and advises us to obey God, and to follow him willingly; to oppose fortune resolutely, and to bear all accidents. Seneca *Epistle 24*

The more the bird flaps and flutters in the snare, the surer she is caught: so that the best way is to submit and lie still ... that "the proceedings of God are unquestionable, and his decrees are not to be resisted." Seneca *On A Happy Life*

A good man can never be miserable, nor a wicked man happy; nor any man unfortunate that cheerfully submits to Providence. Seneca *On A Happy Life* 9

So, the good man dying of cancer is happy. The evil man that dies peacefully at 80 years old is unhappy? This is what happens when you mix reason with mysticism.

There is a strange delight in the very purpose and contemplation of it, as well as in the action; when I can say to myself, "I love my benefactor; what is there in this world that I would not do to oblige and serve him?" Endure death by cancer. Seneca, *On Benefits* 17

God can do what he wants with us

Paul

Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Rom 9.20

Pagan

Nature (God) may do what she pleases with her own. Seneca *On A Happy Life*

So it is with the Christian God.

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Is it for one paltry leg, wretch, that thou dost accuse the universe? Can you not forego that, in consideration of the whole? Canst thou not gladly yield it to Him who gave it? Epictetus, i, 49

God can do whatever He wants. What He has given, He can take back -- life and legs or children in plane crashes.

EDITORS' SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS ON THE PROBLEM OF EVIL: THE FAILURE OF THE CHRISTIANS AND THE STOICS.

Why would a good God allow evil to exist?

Was it Christian Faith or was it Stoic Reason that resolved this problem? The answer is that neither did so.

Comment on the Christian Answer

Christian supernatural superstition did not work. There are many evils in the world. There is murder, war, destructive earthquakes and universal death. But as an example let us use death since all people die and virtually all people fear death. After the alleged death of Christ on the cross the evil God or Nature still existed as did death.

The main tactic in dealing with The Problem of Evil, with a God who allows evil to exist, was in effect to deny that evil exists. Death is really not evil since eternal life in Heaven awaits the believer. Life begins after death. Of course, the writers of the New Testament noticed that Christians were not anxious to embrace death, so they added more reasons, supposedly showing that death and suffering are not really evils. The church also declared that suicide was a mortal sin for which you go to Hell.

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Babies go to Hell if they are not baptized. All we need to remember is that no matter how great is the evil, we have to accept the will of God. Young children die from disease but one should remember that God is the creator and the children are the created. After all God works in mysterious ways! Blind faith is all Christians need.

The Christians did not get their ethics from God; they got them from the Roman Stoic tradition. The Christians added supernatural bliss in Heaven and eternal torture in Hell.

Why does God allow evil to enter the world and why does he not immediately get rid of all evils? Why create eternal punishment and Hell for most people? According to Jesus and Paul only a few orthodox Christian souls are saved and all non-Christians are damned to Hell. This leaves about 5,000,000,000 people who will be forced into a Hell. Why does he not save all human beings; why not universal salvation?

God or Nature does not create justice because the nothingness that people worship can do nothing.

Comment on the Stoic Answer

The central belief of the Stoics was to imitate the rational beneficence of Nature; this impersonal God showers humanity only with good things. Nature, God or Reason were some of the words that they used to designate their God. Follow Nature was the fundamental rule of the stoics. But evils including the sin and death remained.

What was the central error of the Stoics? It was their belief that nature showers humanity with nothing but good things. Nature is good to human beings; we should “follow nature” and do the same. The purpose of life is to

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achieve virtue, that is, to live a life that benefits humanity. This is a noble thought. However, does God or Nature or Reason give only good things on human beings? What about murder, war, disease and death? Are these gifts from the all good God (Nature)? Or are they bestowed on us by an evil God, one that creates or at least sustains evil in the Cosmos; or is Nature simply ethically neutral?

To the Stoics Nature could not be evil. After all, are we to do evil to humans because God does? This would violate the humanistic ethics which the Roman Stoics of the Empire inherited. Their philosophy was merely a rationalization for their humanism.

The only way the Stoics could deal with this Problem of Evil (suffering and death) was simply to answer that death, disease and war, etc., were not evils. God or Nature is simply the great instructor who teaches us about how to live our lives and achieve virtue. God is the father who chastises or beats [disciplines] his son to make him a virtuous person, to make him grow up be a man who does good for humanity.

As we did with the Christians, let us use death as an example of evil. As we pointed out above death is universal and virtually all human beings fear it and considerate it an evil, as a matter of fact, The Evil.

Well, what about death? Seneca taught that death was a part of Nature. The universe itself is dying so why should we complain? Do we not learn how to lead a more virtuous life by observing the deaths of others? Does not death end all of our miseries and sufferings?

Besides, Seneca does not always seem to have taught that life comes to an end. In one passage he indicates that there may be rewards after death for the virtuous

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person and punishment for evil persons. This passage on future life is rare which is why we rejected it above.

The Christians believed in Hell and Heaven. They denied that death is evil since there would be great rewards for the good after death and punishment for the evil. But still Jesus did not conquer death. It remains.

Besides, does not the potter have a right to make the pot the way he wants? Does the created have a right to complain to the creator that he does not like the way he/she was made. Humans were created by God or Nature. Do the created have a right to complain that they must suffer and die? Both Seneca and Paul agreed that humans have no such right. We need to just shut up and obey Nature, God or Reason.

The Stoics did not teach that you should be good to avoid punishment or to be rewarded. They taught that virtue was its own reward; one should be good with no thought of any benefit to oneself. Well, this is not quite true since they held that only the good man was happy in this life and the evil man is totally miserable.

The Stoics believed that you could kill a person but that human being loses nothing of importance, namely virtue. Children and wealth and poverty and power etc, are morally neutral. The only thing that is good is virtue. So if you are murdered virtue is not affected. This is quite mystical, since virtue like everything else, ends at death. Just replace virtue with the idea of the eternal soul and personal survival after death and you get Christianity. Indeed, early Christians much admired Seneca. Some even thought he was a secret Christian! Give or take a passage or two, Seneca did not believe in an afterlife. Virtue means doing good for humankind.

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The Christians believed the following: Humanity was steeped in sin and death. Humans were alienated from God. Jesus was the mediator between God and humanity. The Jews engineered his death under Pontius Pilate. Thus, the Gentiles replaced the Jews as the chosen people of God. (In our first book on Jesus we argue that Christianity is really the product of the pagan Roman Empire. It did not derive from the Jews. Here, we are merely presenting the views of the Christians as they appear in the New Testament.)

People (mainly Gentiles, that is non-Jews) that had faith in Jesus were saved. There were two items that people needed to be saved from: sin and death. The more educated pagans believe that the gods were sinless and provided only good things to humans. The gods were also thought to be immortal; they never died. Apparently some early Christians believed that souls were mortal but faith in Christ could give them eternal life.

Also, apparently some early Christians believed that faith alone saves. Others believed that both faith and good deeds were required. James writes: What is faith without good deeds? Faith without good deeds is dead.

The Stoics believed that virtue (good deeds) was needed for salvation. Indeed, for them virtue is salvation.

But what about death? They believed that both the soul and the body were annihilated at death. Then, did not death bring an end to virtue?

Nor do I speak only of those that do not live up to the strict rule of virtue; but mankind itself is degenerated and lost. Seneca *On Benefits* 19

Using reason humans can achieve virtue (moral goodness) before they die. ... It is agreed upon at all

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hands, That right reason is the perfection of human nature, and wisdom only the dictate of it. Seneca *On A Happy Life*

The Stoics' central error was their belief that the cosmos is beneficent, showering humanity with nothing but good things. Therefore, the Stoics believed we should do good to humans; we should benefit humanity following Reason, Nature or God.

It is forbidden to hurt a man; for he is your fellow citizen in the city of the world. Seneca, *On Anger*, ii, 31

They did not see that Natural Law is indifferent to humans. The Stoics did not get their set of values through Reason or God. They simply inherited the Stoic humanism which was widespread in the Roman Empire.

Is not the Christian God or the Stoic God (Nature or Reason) evil?

Why does God not get rid of the evils of death and suffering, earthquakes, disease and evil people exploiting the good and babies dying, etc. It does not do much good to try to get rid of The Problem of Evil by arguing that death, etc. are not evil;0 that these are indifferents, moral neutrals. The Stoics, Jesus and St. Paul argued that they do not count as evils anymore than whether one is a male or female, barbarian and Greek, slave or free, rich or poor, etc.

All this is futile. You cannot convince people that slavery, poverty, disease, and death are not evils. Of course, the Christians have an answer but one has to accept the idea that God, the soul, Judgment in the next world and Hell and Heaven are real. You also have to accept the idea that eternal punishment for a finite sin is a good idea. And that a just and merciful God is

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the engineer of it all. You would think that at some point people would invent a God who was at least as moral as people are.

PART 3 HELL. WHO GOES TO HELL?
PREDESTINATION. DIVINE TRICKERY. TRAITS
SHARED BY CHRISTIANITY, SENECA AND
PLATO.

CHAPTER 4 AFTERLIFE. CHRISTIANS, PLATO AND SENECA ON HELL

“The theology of St. Paul and of the Fathers was largely derived from Plato directly or indirectly, and can hardly be understood if Plato is ignored.” Bertrand Russell in *History of Western Philosophy* (HWP)

Syncretism

Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary defines the verb *syncretize* as an “...attempt to unite and harmonize especially without critical examination or logical unity.” The word has been applied to both religion and philosophy.

Syncretism ... is the combining of different beliefs, often while melding practices of various schools of thought. The term means "combining." ... Syncretism may involve the merger and analogizing of several originally discrete traditions, especially in the theology and mythology of religion

Religious syncretism exhibits blending of two or more religious belief systems into a new system, or the incorporation into a religious tradition of beliefs from unrelated traditions. ... [Syncretism From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

These beliefs could involve shared or even contradictory beliefs or ideas. Note the mix of pagan, Jewish and Christian ideas in the New Testament.

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Afterlife

The afterlife (also referred to as life after death, the Hereafter, the Next World, or the Other Side) is the belief that a part of, or essence of, or soul of an individual, which carries with it and confers personal identity, survives the death of the body of this world and this lifetime, by natural or supernatural means, in contrast to the belief in eternal oblivion after death. ...

The dead are usually believed to go to a specific plane of existence after death (other than eternal oblivion), typically believed to be determined by a god or divine judge, based on their actions or beliefs during physical life. [Afterlife From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia]

The Immortality of the Soul

Jesus

And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell. Mt 10.28

For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Mt 16.26

But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. Luke 20.35-36

This is a little rough on married people. That the soul will not die anymore implies that the souls were once

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subject to death. Apparently, if one did not become a Christian the soul perishes, at least in some cases.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Jn 5:24

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish (be annihilated), but have everlasting life. Jn 3:16

Here, the soul is not immortal; when the body dies the soul perishes -- if you have not been saved by Christ.

But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. 2 Tim 1:10

Paul

So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? 1 Cor 15.54-5

Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. 1 Cor 15.24-26

The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

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For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Rom 6.23

That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. Rom 5.21

Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Acts 2:27

The Purity of the Soul

The soul doth not apprehend God unless it be pure and holy. Seneca, *Letter lxxxvii*, 21

Like Jesus, Paul and Plato, Seneca holds that one cannot know God unless the soul is pure and holy.

We have to struggle against this flesh with all pure minds. Seneca, *To Marcia*, xxiv, 5.

For what does it profit us to know the true value of things, if we be transported by our passions? Seneca *On A Happy Life* Ch 4

Predicting the End of the World

Christians

Jesus

For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows. Mk 13:8

But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, And

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the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. Mk 13.24-25

And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Mt 10:7

What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? ... Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes. Mt 24.3, 7

But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. Lk 17.29-30

Paul

And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come. 1 Thess 1.10

Resurrection

Resurrection was an idea quite repulsive to Romans. There is probably some influence of the Old Testament on the New Testament as far as the subject is concerned. But it is more likely that most of it came from Zoroastrianism. For more, see our first book on Jesus, *Jesus Christ: A Pagan Myth, Evidence That Jesus Never Existed*.

Paul

Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then

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is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. 1 Cor 15.13-14

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.... And that he was buried, and that he rose again on the third day according to the scriptures 1 Cor 15:3-4

Of course, there is no reference to Christ in the Jewish Scriptures.

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 1 Thess 4.16-17

Note on Resurrection and Empty Tombs In Pagan Novels

The women “fled the empty tomb...and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.” Mk 16.8

The hero, thinking his wife is dead, comes to mourn, and finds the tomb empty. [Ancient pagan novel.]

The similarities between Mark and, for example *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, are obvious:

- condemning the hero to be crucified;
- the entombment of the victim who is (apparently) dead;
- the removal of the stone;
- the empty tomb;
- the temporary inability of the lovers to recognize each other (in Mark, the women think that the angel is a ghost and in Jn, Mary Magdalene

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doesn't recognize Jesus at first).

Tartarus - Hell

In many religious traditions, a hell is a place of suffering and punishment in the afterlife. Religions with a linear divine history often depict hells as endless. Religions with a cyclic history often depict a hell as an intermediary period between incarnations. Typically these traditions locate hell under the Earth's external surface and often include entrances to Hell from the land of the living. Other afterlife destinations include Heaven, Purgatory, Paradise, and Limbo.

Other traditions, which do not conceive of the afterlife as a place of punishment or reward, merely describe hells as an abodes of the dead – a neutral place located under the surface of Earth (for example, see sheol and Hades). [From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia]

Peter

In the New Testament the noun Tartarus does not occur but *tartaroo* (ταρταρόω, "throw to Tartarus") a shortened form of the classical Greek verb *kata-tartaroo* ("throw down to Tartarus") does appear in 2 Pet 2:4:

For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment [Tartarus Greek Main article: *Tartarus* From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia]

Plato

In the *Gorgias*, Plato (c. 400 BC) wrote that souls were judged after death and those who received punishment

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were sent to Tartarus. As a place of punishment, it can be considered a hell. [Tartarus Greek Main article: *Tartarus* From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia]

The Myth of Er is an eschatological legend that concludes Plato's *The Republic*. The tale introduces the idea that moral people are rewarded and immoral people punished after death. [Hell From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia]

Christians and Pagans on Hell and Heaven as a way to control moral behavior of people

The quotes below were taken from "The Origin in the History of the Doctrine of Endless Punishment" by Thomas Thayer.

The following quotes are from Christian leaders who used the pagan concept of Hell to keep the poor masses in subjection to power-hungry and often very evil political and religious men and women.

Tertullian

"How shall I admire, how laugh, how rejoice, how exult, when I behold so many proud monarchs groaning in the lowest abyss of darkness; so many magistrates liquefying in fiercer flames than they ever kindled against the Christians; so many sages philosophers blushing in red-hot fires with their deluded pupils; so many tragedians more tuneful in the expression of their own sufferings; so many dancers tripping more nimbly from anguish than ever before from applause."

Augustine

Augustine believed that Plato did not believe in hell but he thought that such concepts were necessary to control

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the moral behavior of the people. However, Augustine and many ancient Christian writers accepted Plato's view of the afterlife of the closest to the Christian view of Heaven and Hell.

Thomas Aquinas

"That the saints may enjoy their beatitude more thoroughly, and give more abundant thanks for it to God, a perfect sight of the punishment of the damned is granted them."

Jonathan Edwards (A Calvinist of the "Great Awakening" fame. Newspapers reported people leaving his sermons and committing suicide from the fear he instilled in them.)

"The world will probably be converted into a great lake or liquid globe of fire, in which the wicked shall be overwhelmed, which will always be in tempest, in which they shall be tossed to and fro, having no rest day and night, vast waves and billows of fire continually rolling over their heads, of which they shall forever be full of a quick sense within and without; their heads, their eyes, their tongues, their hands, their feet, their loins and their vitals, shall forever be full of a flowing, melting fire, fierce enough to melt the very rocks and elements; and also, they shall eternally be full of the most quick and lively sense to feel the torments; not for one minute, not for one day, not for one age, not for two ages, not for a hundred ages, nor for ten thousand millions of ages, one after another, but forever and ever, without any end at all, and never to be delivered."

John Calvin (Who had some of his theological enemies burned to death in green slow-burning wood.)

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Calvin describes hell as: "Forever harrassed with a dreadful tempest, they shall feel themselves torn asunder by an angry God, and transfixed and penetrated by mortal stings, terrified by the thunderbolts of God, and broken by the weight of his hand, so that to sink into any gulf would be more tolerable than to stand for a moment in these terrors."

Pagans

1. Polybius, the ancient historian, says: "Since the multitude is ever fickle, full of lawless desires, irrational passions and violence, there is no other way to keep them in order but by the fear and terror of the invisible world; on which account our ancestors seem to me to have acted judiciously, when they contrived to bring into the popular belief these notions of the gods, and of the infernal regions." B. vi 56.

3. Livy, the celebrated historian, speaks of it in the same spirit; and he praises the wisdom of Numa, because he invented the fear of the gods, as "a most efficacious means of governing an ignorant and barbarous populace." Hist., I 19.

4. Strabo, the geographer, says: "The multitude are restrained from vice by the punishments the gods are said to inflict upon offenders, and by those terrors and threatenings which certain dreadful words and monstrous forms imprint upon their minds...For it is impossible to govern the crowd of women, and all the common rabble, by philosophical reasoning, and lead them to piety, holiness and virtue - but this must be done by superstition, or the fear of the gods, by means of fables and wonders; for the thunder, the aegis, the trident, the torches (of the Furies), the dragons, &c., are all fables, as is also all the ancient theology. These

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things the legislators used as scarecrows to terrify the childish multitude." Geog., B. I

6. Plato, in his commentary on Timaeus, fully endorses what he says respecting the fabulous invention of these foreign torments. And Strabo says that "Plato and the Brahmins of India invented fables concerning the future judgments of hell" (Hades). And Chrysippus (the Stoic) blames Plato for attempting to deter men from wrong by frightful stories of future punishments.

Plato himself is exceedingly inconsistent, sometimes adopting, even in his serious discourses, the fables of the poets, and at other times rejecting them as utterly false, and giving too frightful views of the invisible world. Sometimes, he argues, on social grounds, that they are necessary to restrain bad men from wickedness and crime, and then again he protests against them on political grounds, as intimidating the citizens, and making cowards of the soldiers, who, believing these things, are afraid of death, and do not therefore fight well. But all this shows in what light he regarded them; not as truths, certainly, but as fictions, convenient in some cases, but difficult to manage in others.

7. Plutarch treats the subject in the same way; sometimes arguing for them with great solemnity and earnestness, and on other occasions calling them "fabulous stories, the tales of mothers and nurses."

8. Seneca says: "Those things which make the infernal regions terrible, the darkness, the prison, the river of flaming fire, the judgment seat, &c., are all a fable, with which the poets amuse themselves, and by them agitate us with vain terrors." Sextus Empiricus calls them "poetic fables of hell;" and Cicero speaks of them as "silly absurdities and fables" (*ineptiis ac fabulis*).

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9. Aristotle. "It has been handed down in mythical form from earliest times to posterity, that there are gods, and that the divine (Deity) compasses all nature. All beside this has been added, after the mythical style, for the purpose of persuading the multitude, and for the interests of the laws, and the advantage of the state."Neander's Church Hist., I, p. 7. 11

Christians, Plato and Seneca on Hell, Judgment Day, and Heaven

Christians

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. Rev 20:12

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. Rev 20:13

The Elect

The hundred and forty and four thousand virgins are saved:

And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they who were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. Rev 14.3-4

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Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. Rev 14:12 (Faith and good works save.)

Christ Rules

Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest. Rev 15.4

And he that overcometh, and keeps my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. Rev 2.26-27

6:13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.

6:14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

6:15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;

6:16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:

6:17 For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand? Rev 6.13-17 (The “loving Jesus” will rule over all.)

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The Condemned

And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.

And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man. (Torture them for five months before you kill them.

And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them. Rev 9.4-6

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. Rev 21:8

And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. Rev 20.15

Altering the Book of Revelation

For I testify unto every man that hears the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. Rev 22:18-19

Jesus

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Jesus: "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen; and have the keys of Hell and of death." Rev 1: 18

Jesus and Hercules

By which also (Jesus) went and preached unto the spirits in prison

(Hell) 1 Pet 3.19 The resurrected Jesus, like Hercules and Dionysius, descends into prison (Hell) and rescues spirits from Hades.

Jesus

Few are saved

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in there. Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find. Mt 7.13-14 (Jesus says that most people will go to hell.)

The damned

The Son of man (Christ) shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Mt 13.41- 42

Jesus says that entire cities will be destroyed and the people "thrust down to hell" for not "receiving" his disciples. LK 10.10-15

Mt. 11:23 and Lk 10:15: "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to Hell."

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"And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to Hell."

And these (the sinful) shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the (morally) righteous into life eternal.
Mt 25:46

I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins Jn 8:24

But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Mt 6:15 You will go to Hell.

Jesus will take: "vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction.... 2 Thess 1.8-9

Non-Christians are damned

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. Jn 14.6

Paul on Hell

If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema. Maranatha (Damned to Hell). 1 Cor 16:22

Hell for Sinners

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Rom 6.3

Plato

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Plato believed in One Spiritual, Personal God, The Immortal Soul, Personal Survival After Death, Judgement, Hell and Purgatory and Heaven.

Platonism

"Platonism" is a term coined by scholars to refer to the intellectual consequences of denying, as Socrates often does, the reality of the material world *Platonic realism*
From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Plato on Hell and Heaven

Heaven

Doing (good deeds), and living after this manner, we shall receive our reward from the Gods and those who are above us. Plato, *Laws*, iv, 718.

Phaedo by Plato ca. 424-347 BCE (The Last Hours Of Socrates by Plato Translated by Benjamin Jowett (Edited by the Daltons. Brackets contain remarks by the editors.)

Phaedo, who is the narrator of the dialogue to Echecrates of Phlius. Socrates, Apollodorus, Simmias, Cebes, Crito and an Attendant of the Prison.

SCENE: The Prison of Socrates.

PLACE OF THE NARRATION: Phlius.

Plato's *Phaedo*:

In the Phaedo Socrates is to die soon. He is allowed to talk freely with his friends.

Pursuing death

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And now, O my judges, I desire to prove to you that the real philosopher has reason to be of good cheer when he is about to die, and that after death he may hope to obtain the greatest good in the other world. And how this may be, Simmias and Cebes, I will endeavour to explain. For I deem that the true votary of philosophy is likely to be misunderstood by other men; they do not perceive that he is always pursuing death and dying; and if this be so, and he has had the desire of death all his life long, why when his time comes should he repine at that which he has been always pursuing and desiring?

For I am quite ready to admit, Simmias and Cebes, that I ought to be grieved at death, if I were not persuaded in the first place that I am going to other gods who are wise and good (of which I am as certain as I can be of any such matters), and secondly (though I am not so sure of this last) to men departed, better than those whom I leave behind; and therefore I do not grieve as I might have done, for I have good hope that there is yet something remaining for the dead, and as has been said of old, some far better thing for the good than for the evil.

What is Death?

Do we believe that there is such a thing as death? To be sure, replied Simmias. Is it not the separation of soul and body? And to be dead is the completion of this; when the soul exists in herself, and is released from the body and the body is released from the soul, what is this but death?

Pleasure

"Here we come under Plato's dualism: between reality and appearance, ideas and sensible objects,

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reason and sense-perception, soul and body. These pairs are connected: the first in each pair is superior to the second both in reality and in goodness. An ascetic morality was the natural consequence of this dualism."
HWP by B. Russell

[Socrates then rejects the pleasures of the body including love.]

Would you not say that he is entirely concerned with the soul and not with the body? He would like, as far as he can, to get away from the body and to turn to the soul.

Truth

What again shall we say of the actual acquirement of knowledge? — is the body, if invited to share in the enquiry, a hinderer or a helper? I mean to say, have sight and hearing any truth in them?

Then must not true existence be revealed to her in thought, if at all?

[Absolute beauty and absolute good?] ... did you ever reach them with any other bodily sense? — and I speak not of these alone, but of absolute greatness, and health, and strength, and of the essence or true nature of everything. Has the reality of them ever been perceived by you through the bodily organs?

(W)hile we are in the body, and while the soul is infected with the evils of the body, our desire will not be satisfied? and our desire is (for) the truth.

"Later philosophers had arguments to prove the identity of the real and the good, but Plato seems to have assumed it as self-evident. If we wish to

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understand him, we must, hypothetically, suppose this assumption justified." HWP by B. Russell:

[The senses cannot be trusted so empirical observation is out. Therefore, science is out. Mathematics and mystic truth are in. Innate and absolute truth are in.]

[Here are a few quotes from the Phaedo to make this clear.]

It has been proved to us by experience that if we would have true knowledge of anything we must be quit of the body — the soul in herself must behold things in themselves: and then we shall attain the wisdom which we desire, and of which we say we are lovers; not while we live, but after death; for if while in company with the body the soul cannot have pure knowledge, knowledge must be attained after death, if at all.

And the true philosophers, and they only, are ever seeking to release the soul [from death].

I believe that I shall equally find good masters and friends in another world.

The founders of the mysteries would appear to have had a real meaning, and were not talking nonsense when they intimated in a figure long ago that he who passes unsanctified and uninitiated into the world below will lie on a slough, but that he who arrives there after initiation and purification will dwell with the gods. For many, as they say in the mysteries, are the thyrsusbearers, but few are the mystics, meaning, as I interpret the words, the true philosophers.

(The Platonic Socrates said "The mystics are ... the true philosophers." He was wrong. When Plato dropped the search for objective truth, when he harnessed logic in

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an attempt to prove what he already believed -- philosophy received its mortal wound. Philosophy was dead. B. Russell.)

[The stoics symbolically interpreted Homer so that they could get confirmation of what they already believed. The Christians added the allegorically interpreted Bible and came up with what they already believed. Jesus, St. Paul, Augustine, and other Christians clothed mysticism in logical garb. We would label both Plato and Christians as rational mystics. Eds.]

Immortality

[Cebes urges Socrates to offer evidence that the soul is immortal. But, as Russell states, "the arguments are very poor."]

Then let us consider the whole question, not in relation to man only, but in relation to animals generally, and to plants, and to everything of which there is generation, and the proof will be easier. Are not all things which have opposites generated out of their opposites? I mean such things as good and evil, just and unjust — and there are innumerable other opposites which are generated out of opposites. ...

I mean to say, for example, that anything which becomes greater must become greater after being less.

And that which becomes less must have been once greater and then have become less. Yes.

And the weaker is generated from the stronger, and the swifter from the slower.

[Very true.]

And the worse is from the better, and the more just is from the more unjust.

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[Of course.]

And is this true of all opposites? and are we convinced that all of them are generated out of opposites? Yes.

[So life and death are opposites and therefore must generate each other. Apparently the belief that opposites generate each other was a widely held idea. It is a silly idea but later was widely held by Hegel and company.]

"The second argument is that knowledge is recollection, and therefore the soul must have existed before birth."
HWP B. Russell.

[Apparently the belief in reincarnation or transmigration was widely held by people in Plato's circle. This may have had a lot to do with the observation that plants die in the winter and return in the spring or the caterpillars turn into butterflies. Well, that's what Platonists get for ignoring the real study of botany and biology. Also, see the Timaeus to see what a mess Plato made of the cosmos when he turned his eye to this subject.]

[According to Plato the soul is eternal and is confused and upset when exposed to the changing material world. It is at ease only when contemplating the unchanging and eternal.]

Yes, replied Socrates, ... all men will agree that God, and the essential form of life, and the immortal in general, will never perish.

The Afterlife

The truth rather is, that the soul which is pure at departing and draws after her no bodily taint, having never voluntarily during life had connection with the body, which she is ever avoiding, herself gathered into

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herself; — and making such abstraction her perpetual study — which means that she has been a true disciple of philosophy; and therefore has in fact been always engaged in the practice of dying? For is not philosophy the practice of death? [And Christianity?]

Certainly — That soul, I say, herself invisible, departs to the invisible world—to the divine and immortal and rational: thither arriving, she is secure of bliss and is released from the error and folly of men, their fears and wild passions and all other human ills, and forever dwells, as they say of the initiated, in company with the gods (compare *Apol.*). Is not this true, Cebes?

[Note, Plato, like the Christians, describes the supernatural world as indivisible, divine, immortal and rational. Christians have described Plato as a philosophical rationalist; actually, like a Christian, he was a rational mystic. First one lists what one believes, then one searches for arguments that will pass as rational to prove that these beliefs are true.]

Yes, said Cebes, beyond a doubt.

But the soul which has been polluted, and is impure at the time of her departure, and is the companion and servant of the body always, and is in love with and fascinated by the body and by the desires and pleasures of the body, until she is led to believe that the truth only exists in a bodily form, which a man may touch and see and taste, and use for the purposes of his lusts, — the soul, I mean, accustomed to hate and fear and avoid the intellectual principle, which to the bodily eye is dark and invisible, and can be attained only by philosophy; — do you suppose that such a soul will depart pure and unalloyed? Impossible, he replied.

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Yes, that is very likely, Cebes; and these must be the souls, not of the good, but of the evil, which are compelled to wander about such places in payment of the penalty of their former evil way of life; and they continue to wander until through the craving after the corporeal which never leaves them, they are imprisoned finally in another body. And they may be supposed to find their prisons in the same natures which they have had in their former lives.

What natures do you mean, Socrates?

What I mean is that men who have followed after gluttony, and wantonness, and drunkenness, and have had no thought of avoiding them, would pass into asses and animals of that sort. What do you think?

I think such an opinion to be exceedingly probable.

And those who have chosen the portion of injustice, and tyranny, and violence, will pass into wolves, or into hawks and kites; — whither else can we suppose them to go?

Yes, said Cebes; with such natures, beyond question.

And there is no difficulty, he said, in assigning to all of them places answering to their several natures and propensities?

There is not, he said.

Some are happier than others; and the happiest both in themselves and in the place to which they go are those who have practised the civil and social virtues which are called temperance and justice, and are

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acquired by habit and attention without philosophy and mind.

Why are they the happiest?

Because they may be expected to pass into some gentle and social kind which is like their own, such as bees or wasps or ants, or back again into the form of man, and just and moderate men may be supposed to spring from them.

Very likely.

No one who has not studied philosophy and who is not entirely pure at the time of his departure is allowed to enter the company of the Gods, but the lover of knowledge only. And this is the reason, Simmias and Cebes, why the true votaries of philosophy abstain from all fleshly lusts, and hold out against them and refuse to give themselves up to them, — not because they fear poverty or the ruin of their families, like the lovers of money, and the world in general; nor like the lovers of power and honour, because they dread the dishonour or disgrace of evil deeds.

No, Socrates, that would not become them, said Cebes.

No indeed, he replied; and therefore they who have any care of their own souls, and do not merely live moulding and fashioning the body, say farewell to all this; they will not walk in the ways of the blind: and when philosophy offers them purification and release from evil, they feel that they ought not to resist her influence, and whither she leads they turn and follow.

What do you mean, Socrates?

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I will tell you, he said. The lovers of knowledge are conscious that the soul was simply fastened and glued to the body—until philosophy received her, she could only view real existence through the bars of a prison, not in and through herself; she was wallowing in the mire of every sort of ignorance; and by reason of lust had become the principal accomplice in her own captivity. This was her original state; and then, as I was saying, and as the lovers of knowledge are well aware, philosophy, seeing how terrible was her confinement, of which she was to herself the cause, received and gently comforted her and sought to release her, pointing out that the eye and the ear and the other senses are full of deception, and persuading her to retire from them, and abstain from all but the necessary use of them, and be gathered up and collected into herself, bidding her trust in herself and her own pure apprehension of pure existence, and to mistrust whatever comes to her through other channels and is subject to variation; for such things are visible and tangible, but what she sees in her own nature is intelligible and invisible. And the soul of the true philosopher thinks that she ought not to resist this deliverance, and therefore abstains from pleasures and desires and pains and fears, as far as she is able Why, because each pleasure and pain is a sort of nail which nails and rivets the soul to the body, until she becomes like the body, and believes that to be true which the body affirms to be true; and from agreeing with the body and having the same delights she is obliged to have the same habits and haunts, and is not likely ever to be pure at her departure to the world below, but is always infected by the body; and so she sinks into another body and there germinates and grows, and has therefore no part in the communion of the divine and pure and simple.

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The soul of a philosopher will reason in quite another way; she will not ask philosophy to release her in order that when released she may deliver herself up again to the thraldom of pleasures and pains, doing a work only to be undone again, weaving instead of unweaving her Penelope's web. But she will calm passion, and follow reason, and dwell in the contemplation of her, beholding the true and divine (which is not matter of opinion), and thence deriving nourishment. Thus she seeks to live while she lives, and after death she hopes to go to her own kindred and to that which is like her, and to be freed from human ills. Never fear, Simmias and Cebes, that a soul which has been thus nurtured and has had these pursuits, will at her departure from the body be scattered and blown away by the winds and be nowhere and nothing.

But because they are sacred to Apollo, they have the gift of prophecy, and anticipate the good things of another world, wherefore they sing and rejoice in that day more than they ever did before. And I too, believing myself to be the consecrated servant of the same God ... I have received from my master gifts of prophecy which are not inferior to theirs ...

But then, O my friends, (Socrates) said, if the soul is really immortal, what care should be taken of her, not only in respect of the portion of time which is called life, but of eternity! And the danger of neglecting her from this point of view does indeed appear to be awful. If death had only been the end of all, the wicked would have had a good bargain in dying, for they would have been happily quit not only of their body, but of their own evil together with their souls. But now, inasmuch as the soul is manifestly immortal, there is no release or salvation from evil except the attainment of the highest virtue and wisdom. For the soul when on her progress to the world below takes nothing with her but nurture

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and education; and these are said greatly to benefit or greatly to injure the departed, at the very beginning of his journey thither.

Heaven, Purgatory and Hell

For after death, as they say, the genius of each individual, to whom he belonged in life, leads him to a certain place in which the dead are gathered together, whence after judgment has been given they pass into the world below, following the guide, who is appointed to conduct them from this world to the other: and when they have there received their due and remained their time, another guide brings them back again after many revolutions of ages. Now this way to the other world is not, as Aeschylus says in the Telephus, a single and straight path — if that were so no guide would be needed, for no one could miss it; but there are many partings of the road, and windings, as I infer from the rites and sacrifices which are offered to the gods below in places where three ways meet on earth. The wise and orderly soul follows in the straight path and is conscious of her surroundings; but the soul which desires the body ... when she arrives at the place where the other souls are gathered, if she be impure and have done impure deeds, whether foul murders or other crimes ... from that soul every one flees and turns away; no one will be her companion, no one her guide, but alone she wanders in extremity of evil until certain times are fulfilled, and when they are fulfilled, she is borne irresistibly to her own fitting habitation; as every pure and just soul which has passed through life in the company and under the guidance of the gods has also her own proper home.

What do you mean, Socrates? said Simmias. I have myself heard many descriptions of the earth, but I

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do not know, and I should very much like to know, in which of these you put faith.

And I, Simmias, replied Socrates, ... I may describe to you, however, the form and regions of the earth according to my conception of them.

That, said Simmias, will be enough.

There is a chasm which is the vastest of them all, and pierces right through the whole earth; this is that chasm which Homer describes in the words,— 'Far off, where is the inmost depth beneath the earth;' and which he in other places, and many other poets, have called Tartarus (Hell-eds.). ...

Judgment

Such is the nature of the other world; and when the dead arrive at the place to which the genius of each severally guides them, first of all, they have sentence passed upon them, as they have lived well and piously or not.

Those who lived neither well nor ill:

And those who appear to have lived neither well nor ill, go to the river Acheron, and embarking in any vessels which they may find, are carried in them to the lake, and there they dwell and are purified of their evil deeds, and having suffered the penalty of the wrongs which they have done to others, they are absolved, and receive the rewards of their good deeds, each of them according to his deserts.

Great Sinners: Hell

But those who appear to be incurable by reason of the greatness of their crimes—who have committed many and terrible deeds of sacrilege, murders foul and

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violent, or the like—such are hurled into Tartarus which is their suitable destiny, and they never come out.

Those who have committed crimes (not irremediable): Tartarus for a year etc.

Those again who have committed crimes, which, although great, are not irremediable—who in a moment of anger, for example, have done violence to a father or a mother, and have repented for the remainder of their lives, or, who have taken the life of another under the like extenuating circumstances—these are plunged into Tartarus, the pains of which they are compelled to undergo for a year, but at the end of the year the wave casts them forth—mere homicides by way of Cocytus, parricides and matricides by Pyriphlegethon—and they are borne to the Acherusian lake, and there they lift up their voices and call upon the victims whom they have slain or wronged, to have pity on them, and to be kind to them, and let them come out into the lake. And if they prevail, then they come forth and cease from their troubles; but if not, they are carried back again into Tartarus and from thence into the rivers unceasingly, until they obtain mercy from those whom they have wronged: for that is the sentence inflicted upon them by their judges.

Pre-eminent for holiness of life: Heaven Above

Those too who have been pre-eminent for holiness of life are released from this earthly prison, and go to their pure home which is above, and dwell in the purer earth; and of these, such as have duly purified themselves with philosophy live henceforth altogether without the body, in mansions fairer still which may not be described, and of which the time would fail me to tell.

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Wherefore, Simmias, seeing all these things, what ought not we to do that we may obtain virtue and wisdom in this life? Fair is the prize, and the hope great!

A man of sense ought not to say, nor will I be very confident, that the description which I have given of the soul and her mansions is exactly true. But I do say that, inasmuch as the soul is shown to be immortal, he may venture to think, not improperly or unworthily, that something of the kind is true. The venture is a glorious one, and he ought to comfort himself with words like these, which is the reason why I lengthen out the tale. Wherefore, I say, let a man be of good cheer about his soul, who having cast away the pleasures and ornaments of the body as alien to him and working harm rather than good, has sought after the pleasures of knowledge; and has arrayed the soul, not in some foreign attire, but in her own proper jewels, temperance, and justice, and courage, and nobility, and truth—in these adorned she is ready to go on her journey to the world below, when her hour comes. You, Simmias and Cebes, and all other men, will depart at some time or other. Me already, as the tragic poet would say, the voice of fate calls. Soon I must drink the poison; and I think that I had better repair to the bath first, in order that the women may not have the trouble of washing my body after I am dead.

When he had done speaking, Crito said: And have you any commands for us, Socrates — anything to say about your children, or any other matter in which we can serve you?

Nothing particular, Crito, he replied: only, as I have always told you, take care of yourselves; that is a service which you may be ever rendering to me and mine and to all of us, whether you promise to do so or not. But if you have no thought for yourselves, and care

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not to walk according to the rule which I have prescribed for you, not now for the first time, however much you may profess or promise at the moment, it will be of no avail.

We will do our best, said Crito: And in what way shall we bury you?

In any way that you like; but you must get hold of me, and take care that I do not run away from you. Then he turned to us, and added with a smile: — I cannot make Crito believe that I am the same Socrates who have been talking and conducting the argument; he fancies that I am the other Socrates whom he will soon see, a dead body — and he asks, How shall he bury me? And though I have spoken many words in the endeavour to show that when I have drunk the poison I shall leave you and go to the joys of the blessed, — these words of mine, with which I was comforting you and myself, have had, as I perceive, no effect upon Crito. And therefore I want you to be surety for me to him now, as at the trial he was surety to the judges for me: but let the promise be of another sort; for he was surety for me to the judges that I would remain, and you must be my surety to him that I shall not remain, but go away and depart; and then he will suffer less at my death, and not be grieved when he sees my body being burned or buried. I would not have him sorrow at my hard lot, or say at the burial, Thus we lay out Socrates, or, Thus we follow him to the grave or bury him; for false words are not only evil in themselves, but they infect the soul with evil. Be of good cheer, then, my dear Crito, and say that you are burying my body only, and do with that whatever is usual, and what you think best.

Crito made a sign to the servant, who was standing by; and he went out, and having been absent for some time, returned with the jailer carrying the cup

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of poison. Socrates said: You, my good friend, who are experienced in these matters, shall give me directions how I am to proceed. The man answered: You have only to walk about until your legs are heavy, and then to lie down, and the poison will act. At the same time he handed the cup to Socrates, who in the easiest and gentlest manner, without the least fear or change of colour or feature, looking at the man with all his eyes, Echecrates, as his manner was, took the cup and said: What do you say about making a libation out of this cup to any god? May I, or not?

Nor was I the first; for Crito, when he found himself unable to restrain his tears, had got up, and I followed; and at that moment, Apollodorus, who had been weeping all the time, broke out in a loud and passionate cry which made cowards of us all. Socrates alone retained his calmness: What is this strange outcry? he said. I sent away the women mainly in order that they might not misbehave in this way, for I have been told that a man should die in peace. Be quiet, then, and have patience. When we heard his words we were ashamed, and refrained our tears; and he walked about until, as he said, his legs began to fail, and then he lay on his back, according to the directions, and the man who gave him the poison now and then looked at his feet and legs; and after a while he pressed his foot hard, and asked him if he could feel; and he said, No; and then his leg, and so upwards and upwards, and showed us that he was cold and stiff. And he felt them himself, and said: When the poison reaches the heart, that will be the end. He was beginning to grow cold about the groin, when he uncovered his face, for he had covered himself up, and said — they were his last words — he said: Crito, I owe a cock to Asclepius; will you remember to pay the debt? The debt shall be paid, said Crito; is there anything else? There was no answer to

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this question; but in a minute or two a movement was heard, and the attendants uncovered him; his eyes were set, and Crito closed his eyes and mouth.

Such was the end, Echecrates, of our friend; concerning whom I may truly say, that of all the men of his time whom I have known, he was the wisest and justest and best.

Comment on Socrates by Bertrand Russell

"(Socrates) is dishonest and sophistical in argument, and in his private thinking he uses intellect to prove conclusions that are to him agreeable, rather than in a disinterested search for knowledge." HWP B. Russell

"His courage in the face of death would have been more remarkable if he had not believed that he was going to enjoy eternal bliss in the company of the gods. Unlike some of his predecessors, he was not scientific in his thinking, but was determined to prove the universe agreeable to his ethical standards. This is treachery to truth, and the worst of philosophic sins. As a man, we may believe him admitted to the communion of saints; but as a philosopher he needs a long residence in a scientific purgatory." HWP B. Russell

Bertrand Arthur William Russell, 3rd Earl Russell, OM, FRS (18 May 1872 – 2 February 1970) was a British philosopher, logician, mathematician, historian, and social critic. From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Quotes by Bertrand Russell are from *The History of Western Philosophy* (HWP)

Bertrand Russell on Plato and Aristotle:

Plato (ca 424– 348 BCE)

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Russell on *The Phaedo* by Plato

Phaedo is the report of Socrates facing death. What the gospel account of the Passion and the Crucifixion was for Christians, the *Phaedo* was for pagan or free-thinking philosophers. But the imperturbability of Socrates in his last hour is bound up with his belief in immortality, and the *Phaedo* is important as setting forth ... not only the death of a martyr, but also many doctrines which were afterwards Christian. The theology of St Paul and of the Fathers was largely derived from it, directly or indirectly, and can hardly be understood if Plato is ignored. HWP Part 2 Ch 16

Aristotle

We must infer that God does not know of the existence of our sublunary world [He was not a personal God, could not hear prayers, etc.]

It does not appear that Aristotle believed in personal immortality, in the sense in which it was taught by Plato and afterwards by Christianity. HWP

Aristotle

Aristotle, was the greatest thinker of the ancient world and the encyclopaedic organizer (like Herbert Spencer in the 19th century) of all knowledge. The common idea, that he and Plato are the two typical thinkers of ancient Greece, is very far astray. As the highest authority on Greek philosophy, Zeller, says, nine-tenths of the Greek thinkers were materialists, while all admit that Plato's spiritualism had extraordinarily few followers. [Joseph McCabe]

It is said that at the close of one of (Plato's) lectures the only hearer left was Aristotle, who completely rejected

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his idea of spirit (as nearly all the Greek philosophers did). [Joseph McCabe]

Plato: Conclusion

Over three centuries before Christ, Plato provided the basic theology of Christianity.

With his rational mysticism Plato produced a unique religious system which was attractive to educated persons. It included one Spiritual, Personal God, the Immortal Soul, Personal Survival After Death, Judgment, Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven. Plato's system demanded purity, a rejection of fleshly sins. It also rejected the senses in the pursuit of knowledge. A study of the material cosmos was also rejected, in favor of a 'rational mystical' approach to the invisible, supernatural world.

Plutarch and Middle Platonism

Middle Platonism: (ca. 90 BCE - until the Neo-Platonist, Plotinus who died in 270 CE)

Plutarch (c. 46 CE - c.120 CE), Plutarch ... was a Greek historian, biographer, essayist, and Middle Platonist known primarily for his *Parallel Lives* and *Moralia*.

Plutarch's Theology [From *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*]

Punishment after Death

Plutarch argues that wickedness is not always to be punished (here on earth).... (He) suggests, the punishment (by) the divine does not have to be obvious;

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this can take place in the afterlife of the soul, as is suggested in Plato's *Republic* 10

Platonism had a big influence on the theology of the New Testament. The reader may wonder why we find so much superstition in the New Testament. He/she should remember that the Platonism of the first century CE was Middle Platonism which contained a huge amount of superstition, as the reader will see in the following pages on Plutarch.

Some quotes by Plutarch from *Of Isis and Osiris, or of the ancient religion and philosophy of Egypt:*

1 ... (T)ruth being the greatest good that man can receive, and the goodliest blessing that God can give. ... For the blessedness of the Deity consists not in silver and gold, nor yet his power in lightnings and thunders, but in knowledge and wisdom.

2 ... We shall know true being, if with reason and sanctimony we approach the sacred temples of this Goddess.

10 Moreover, the men of the sword (In Egypt) had a beetle carved upon their signets, because there is no such thing as a female beetle; for they are all males, and they generate their young in certain round pellets formed of dirt, being herein as well providers of the place in which they are to be engendered, as of the matter of their nutrition.

12 ... Isis and Osiris were in love with one another before they were born, and enjoyed each other in the dark before they came into the world. Some add also that Arueris was thus begotten, and that he was called by the Egyptians the elder Horus, and by the Greeks Apollo.

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Some Titles of Plutarch's writings:

Of The Soul's Immortality. Of Divination

How It Comes To Pass That A Woman's Too Frequent Conversation With A Man Hinders Conception (!)

Why the Flesh of Sheep bitten by Wolves is sweeter than that of others, and the Wool more apt to breed Lice

Which is the Fittest Time for a Man to Know his Wife?

Why Women never eat the middle part of a Lettuce

Against those who find fault with Plato for saying that Drink passeth through the Lungs

That we ought carefully to preserve ourselves from pleasures arising from bad music. And how it may be done

Concerning Pythagoras's Symbols, in which he forbids us to receive a swallow into our House, and bids us as soon as we are risen to ruffle the Bedclothes

Why we give least Credit to Dreams in Autumn

Why is the Sight of a Cuttle-fish a Sign of a great Storm?

Why will Bees sooner Sting those who newly before have committed Whoredom?

Why does (Plato) call the Supreme God Father and Maker of all Things?

Seneca on Future Life

The Soul is Immortal. There is Life after Death, complete with Heaven and Hell

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We agree with the vast number of scholars that believe Seneca held to the traditional stoic view that the soul dies with the body, that there is no Afterlife. In our 900 page edition of *Morals* by Seneca, we only found two passages which indicate a belief in a future life. Both are in Seneca's *On a Happy Life*. The evidence of his writings indicates that he believed in no future life. See the section (The Soul is Mortal) which immediately follows this one.

Seneca

In the question of the immortality of the soul, it goes very far with me, a general consent to the opinion of a future reward and punishment; which meditation raises me to the contempt of this life, in hopes of a better. But still, though we know that we have a soul; yet what the soul is, how, and from whence, we are utterly ignorant Seneca *On a Happy Life* 6

The day will come that shall separate this mixture of soul and body, of divine and human; my body I will leave where I found it, my soul I will restore to heaven, which would have been there already, but for the clog that keeps it down Seneca

(After death) we shall then discover the secrets of Nature; the darkness shall be discussed, and our souls irradiated with light and glory: a glory without a shadow; a glory that shall surround us, and from whence we shall look down and see day and night beneath us. If we cannot lift up our eyes toward the lamp of heaven (the sun) without dazzling, what shall we do when we come to behold the divine light in its illustrious original? Death is the intermission of a life, which will return again. Let us rather wait God's pleasure, and pray for health and life. Seneca *On a Happy Life* Ch 21

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“Return again” may be a reference to old Stoic theory that the souls (with no personal survival) orbited the Earth until the next cycle when the cosmos is reborn and all life begins again. In the meanwhile, the virtuous soul circle higher (more pure, closer to the heavens) than the less moral soul. This was as close as the Stoics come to the Christian idea of Heaven and Hell. Seneca *On a Happy Life* Ch 18

This life is only a prelude to eternity, where we are to expect another original, and another state of things; we have no prospect of heaven here but at a distance; let us therefore expect our last and decretory hour with courage. Seneca *On a Happy Life* Ch 18

The last (I say) to our bodies, but not to our minds (souls): our luggage we leave behind us, and return as naked out of the world as we came into it. The day which we fear as our last is but the birthday of our eternity; and it is the only way to it. Seneca *On a Happy Life* Ch 18

Shall any man see the glory and order of the universe; and shall he not consider the Author and Disposer of all this; and whither we ourselves shall go, when our souls shall be delivered from the slavery of our flesh? The whole creation we see conforms to the dictates of Providence, and follows God both as a governor and as a guide. A great, a good, and a right mind, is a kind of divinity lodged in flesh, and may be the blessing of a slave as well as of a prince; it came from heaven, and to heaven it must return; and it is a kind of heavenly felicity, which a pure and virtuous mind enjoys, in some degree, even upon earth: whereas temples of honor are but empty names, which, probably, owe their beginning either to ambition or to violence. Seneca *On a Happy Life*

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(People give) horrid description of another world: nay, taking it for granted that there will be no reward and punishment, they are yet more afraid of an annihilation than of hell itself. Seneca *On a Happy Life* Ch 21

The Soul is Mortal. It Dies when the body dies. There is no life after death.

The Stoics did not believe in personal survival after death and so there was no reward in Heaven and punishment in Hell. Virtue is salvation. The soul dies when the body dies. There is no hereafter.

Note on Seneca's mention of Heaven and Hell.

In our 930 page book, *Morals* by Seneca, we could only find one mention of the Afterlife, Heaven and Hell. All other passages are compatible with the belief that the soul dies with the body, that there is no life after death. All evidence indicates that for 300 years stoics did not believe in life after death. The editors have no idea why these few passages to future life appear in *On a Happy Life*. In any case, we agree with modern scholars who maintain that Seneca believed that there is no life after death.

Differences between Jesus and Seneca

For Jesus and Paul intention is not enough. Real life begins at death; life on earth is merely vale of tears. The only Good is avoiding Hell and going to Heaven. Faith in Jesus is what saves one, not virtue itself. So, for the Stoics good deeds do save. Indeed a virtuous life, itself, is salvation. All this is supposedly accomplished by philosophical reason, as opposed to the mystical faith of the Christians.

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Above Seneca states that the soul is immortal and humans may have a hope of a better life after death. But in the same paragraph he adds: "But still, though we know that we have a soul; yet what the soul is, how, and from whence, we are utterly ignorant"

And elsewhere Seneca writes: Die we must; but when? what is that to us? It is the law of Nature, the tribute of mortals, and the remedy of all evils. It is but a moment's work, the parting of the soul and body. It is not death itself that is dreadful, but the fear of it that goes before it. Seneca *On a Happy Life* Ch 21

Death is the remedy for all of our evils? This is a typical Stoic view of death. Does this passage sound like a man who is looking forward to a better life after death?

...(D)eath lies in his way to heaven; for the soul of a wise man is there beforehand: nay, if there were nothing after death to be either expected or feared, he would yet leave this world with as great a mind (a virtuous soul even), though he were to pass into a state of annihilation. Seneca *On a Happy Life* Ch 18

It is a great providence that we have more ways out of the world than we have into it. To suffer death is but the law of Nature; and it is a great comfort that it can be done but once; in the very convulsions of it, we have this consolation, that our pain is near an end, and that it frees us from all the miseries of life. What it is we know not, and it were rash to condemn what we do not understand; but this we presume, either that we shall pass out of this into a better life, where we shall live with tranquillity and splendor, in diviner mansions, or else return to our first principles ... (atoms which the Stoics believe were eternal) For the Stoic the choice is between "diviner mansions" and annihilation, not Hell or Heaven. There is nothing immortal ... everything

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comes to an end. What an arrogance is it then, when the world itself stands condemned to a dissolution, that man alone should expect to live forever! It is unjust not to allow unto the giver the power of disposing of his own bounty and a folly only to value the present.

When we should die, we will not, and when we would not, we must: but our fate is fixed, and unavoidable is the decree. Why do we then stand trembling when the time comes? Why should it trouble us then to die, as a forerunner of an universal dissolution? A great mind submits itself to God, and suffers willingly what the law of the universe will otherwise bring to pass upon necessity. To die sooner or later is not the business; but to die well or ill: for death brings us to immortality.
Seneca *On a Happy Life* Ch 18

Why do we not rather advance our thoughts to things that are eternal, and contemplate the heavenly original of all beings? Why do we not, by the divinity of reason, triumph over the weakness of flesh and blood? It is by Providence that the world is preserved, and not from any virtue in the matter of it; for the world is as mortal as we are: only the almighty wisdom carries it safe through all the motions of corruption. Seneca *Epistle* 22

The soul is in heaven even while it is in the flesh; if it be purged of natural corruptions, and taken up with divine thoughts.... Seneca *On Benefits* Ch 18

Death may carry an appearance of evil, though in truth it is itself no evil at all.... Seneca *On a Happy Life* Ch 21

Death is a thing which no care can avoid, no felicity can time it, no power overcome it. Seneca *Epistle* 27 [Enter the saving intervention of Christ, according to the Christians.]

AFTERLIFE

But the great matter is to die ... cheerfully upon the foundation of virtue; for life in itself is irksome, and only eating and drinking in a circle. *Seneca On a Happy Life* Ch 21 [This thought is like that of a Christian. This life is only eating and drinking in a circle. Substitute the future life for Seneca's virtue and you get the Christian view of the Afterlife.]

(Of) this we are sure of, "the fear of death is a continual slavery, as the contempt of it is certain liberty." *Seneca On a Happy Life* Ch 21 [Like the Christian, the Stoic escapes this vale of tears with the coming of death.]

Death is the wish of some, the relief of many, and the end of all. *Seneca*

The contempt of death makes all the miseries of life easy to us. *Seneca On a Happy Life* Ch 21

Not a few there are that (provided they may save their bodies) never care what becomes of their souls. *Seneca On Benefits*

Passion and reason are a kind of civil war within us; and as the one or the other has dominion, we are either good or bad. There are sown the seeds of divine things in mortal bodies. If the mind be well cultivated, the fruit answers the original; and if not, all runs into weeds. *Seneca Epistle 22*

Man is compounded of soul and body, and has naturally a Civil War within himself. The difference between a life of virtue and a life of pleasure. *Seneca Epistle 20*

Souls find their way easiest to the Gods when they have been withdrawn early from the society of men, for they are the least soiled. *Seneca, To Marcia, xxiii.*

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It may be some question whether such a man goes to heaven, or heaven comes to him: for a good man is influenced by God himself, and has a kind of divinity within him. Seneca *Epistle 22*

St. John vs. Seneca on the End Times

Compare Revelation with the (Stoic) Seneca's (ca 3 CE-ca 65 CE) description of the end of the world in his letter to Marcia.

Revelation

In Revelation, the angels of destruction destroy one-third of all trees and all green grass, and a third of the sea becomes blood. The bottomless pit is opened (Rev 9.1ff). "They were allowed to torture (those without seals) for five months but not to kill them" (Rev 9.5). An army of 200,000 destroys people, one-third are killed by fire, smoke, and brimstone, "...if they did not repent, worshiping devils and idols of gold and silver and stone and wood...." (Rev 9.20). In the end, all of the heavens and the earth are destroyed. (Rev 21.1).

The Final Judgment

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. Rev 20:13

The Elect

The hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they who were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. Rev 14.3-4

AFTERLIFE

Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. Rev 14:12

The Condemned

And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. Rev 20.15

Seneca on the end of the world

For Seneca there is going to be a fiery conflagration in which the order of the cosmos is temporarily destroyed. Some stoics believed everything repeats.

Seneca describes this end time, “I am behold the rise and fall of future kingdoms, the downfall of great cities, and new invasions of the sea... know that nothing will abide where it is now placed, that time will lay all things low and take all things with it.” This includes “...places, countries, and the great parts of the universe. It will level whole mountains... it will drink up seas....” There will be plagues, earthquakes and floods, which will kill all creatures. The fire will destroy all. The world will be blotted out in order to begin life anew. “... when it shall seem best to God to create (design?) the universe anew — we, too, amid the falling universe, shall be added as a tiny fraction to this mighty destruction and shall be changed again into our former elements.” (Seneca believed in no personal survival after death, putting aside some passages by Seneca with religious language. For some stoics, the cycles of destruction and reconstruction are infinite in number. See our Book, *Jesus Christ: A Pagan Myth- Evidence That Jesus Never Lived.*)

CHAPTER 5 WHO GOES TO HELL? JESUS SAYS NEARLY EVERYONE.

Who Goes to Hell?

Christian Brotherhood

Love all men?

Liberal Christians today picture Jesus as loving and inclusive. Let's take a look at this picture.

Jesus

All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. Mt 11:27 [Rough on unbaptised Christians, babies and non-Christians.]

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. Jn 13.35 [Jesus at the Last Supper.]

Paul

The Body as a Metaphor:

For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Rom 12.4-5

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to

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drink into one Spirit. 1 Cor 12.12-13 [Jews and pagans can be saved – if they convert to Christianity. Otherwise, they get a trip to Hell. This includes unbaptized babies.]

The body as a metaphor for the unity of humankind:

The members of a human body, all working together for the common good was a common *topos* in Greco-Roman literature. Seneca and Epictetus used this metaphor. The Stoics believed that humans were good by nature; that is, humans are born with an inclination to care for other humans. For the Christians the family of humanity is restricted to Orthodox Christians. Jews and Gentiles, bond or free are included only if they become Christians.

Jesus

For the following please see the Gospel of John, *Skeptics Annotated Bible* (skepticsannotatedbible.com).

It is hard to find a passage where Jesus says to love all people including non-Christians.

Of course, there is a famous passage in John's gospel which says that God loved the world (all people): "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Jn 3:16

But John knew that some people accused the Christians of believing in a God that condemned all people. So, he added verse 17:

"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." (if they dumped their religion and became Christians). Jn 3:17

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And to make this clear, he adds verse 18: “He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” Jn 3:18

God offers his own son as a blood sacrifice on the cross so that a few Orthodox Christians will be saved, while the rest of the Christians, including unbaptized babies, go to Hell. It should be emphasized that all non-Christians also go to Hell. It would have been simpler for an all forgiving and all loving God with infinite power to forgive all and give universal salvation as Origen argued.

Paul

For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Gal 5.14 But it applies only to Christians: “Brethren ... by love serve one another.” Gal 5.13

And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: To the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.
1 Thess 3.12-13

“Love ...all men,” so that they may convert to Christianity before the second coming of Christ at the Apocalypse? In any case, this is a rare occurrence in the genuine letters of Paul.

Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the febleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both

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among yourselves, and to all men. 1 Thess 5.14-15 [If one is a member of a social minority, small in number, this is good advice.]

“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men.

“For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

“For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; [I guess this would include the immoral Emperor Nero.]

“Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” (Convert to Christianity.) 1 Tim 2.1-4

Most scholars know that this letter was not written by Paul. Like other late letters, this letter is inclined to throw in an occasional kind comment concerning non-Christians. This accommodating attitude helped to make Christianity the official religion of the Empire by the fourth century CE.

Only Christians are the Children of God

Jesus

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Mt 6:9

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. Jn 1.12-13

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Paul

For ye (Christians) are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. Gal 3.26

For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God ... Rom 8.15-16

To all (Christians) that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Rom 1.7

Love other Christians

Jesus

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one another." Jn 13.35 [John's God loves only those that are Christians.]

Paul

Like Jesus, Paul places a large emphasis on hatred of outsiders:

Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loves another hath fulfilled the law. Rom 13:8

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not (love), I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. 1 Cor 13.1

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not (love) , I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods

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to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love it profits me nothing. 1 Cor 13.2-3

Who Goes to Hell?

What did the Christians think happened to outsiders? For Jesus and Paul, what was the fate of non-Orthodox Christians, Jews, and pagans?

We are interested in how Christians treated outsiders, that is Jews, pagans and heretics, etc. Who did they think it was proper to socialize with? Who could members dine with? Were they allowed to marry non-Christians? Who did they think would go to Hell or Heaven? How did all of this apply to Jews, pagans and heretics?

Christians on the fate of Jews:

The anti-semitic hatred of Jews is rampant throughout the New Testament including the Gospels.

The Jews receive the greatest hatred by Jesus. The non-Jewish Centurion receives the greatest praise from Jesus who says that in all of Israel he has not seen such great faith. In John's Gospel they are called the children of Satan and the synagogue of Satan. And in Matthew all the Jews and all of their descendants are blamed for the killing of Christ. Jesus is a supersessionist. The Jews engineered the death of Christ, the son of God, and so are no longer the chosen people of God. As Paul says salvation is for the Gentiles, non-Jews. Anti-Semitism in Christianity is not an accident.

Saving the soul through Jesus is the only good. Thus, the hatred of Jesus for Jews. Jesus even teaches Jews in parables so that they will be spiritually blinded and

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not be converted and saved. The spiritual blinding accounts for why an infinitely powerful God is not able to convert everyone. It is God's plan. All Jews who do not convert are doomed to Hell.

John the Baptist: O generation of vipers

And the Jews were baptized (by John the Baptist) in the Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Mt 3:6-7

O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. Mt 12.34

Jesus and John the Baptist are speaking of the Jews, the whole generation !

Jesus on Jews

The Tenant Story Mark 12.1-12:

12:1 And he began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.

12:6 Having yet therefore one son, his well beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son.

12:7 But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours.

12:8 And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard.

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12:9 What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.

The Tenant Story: The meaning of the allegory is that the Jewish covenant is only temporary. It will be nullified by “the Jews” when they reject and kill the Son of God. They will then no longer be the people of God; the non-Jews will replace them and be given the vineyard, that is, the kingdom of God. The tenant story is clearly a product of the early church. See chapter 7 of our A Pagan Myth book - Evidence That Jesus Never Lived.

Jesus: Compassion for Jews?

9:35 And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

9:36 But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Mt 9.35-36

Food

14:13 When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities.

14:14 And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.

14:15 And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals.

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15:32 Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way. Mt 15.32

The Jews and Their Descendents are “Guilty” of Killing Christ

Then answered all the people (Jews), and said, (Jesus') blood be on us, and on our children. Mt 27:25

Now, not only are all of the Jews of Jesus' time evil, but all of their descendants are guilty. This verse condemns all Jews as Christ killers and has been used by Christians to justify the persecution of Jews for about 2000 years.

I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Rev 2.9

For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Mt 13.10, 13-15

The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would show them a sign from heaven. 16:4

A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed. Mt 16.1,4

Hatred of the Scribes and Pharisees Mt 23.13-39

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The Scribes were not a political or religious group; they were merely an occupation like secretaries are today. In the late Gospel of John the Pharisees play an important part in bringing about the death of Jesus. In about 30 CE the Pharisees had no such power. The verses indicating any such power are reflective of a later time when the major opponents of Christianity in Palestine were the Pharisees.

But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Mt 23.13

In 30 CE the Pharisees did not have the power to stop anybody from becoming a Christian.

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. Mt 23.15

What power the Pharisees had was confined to Judea. They made no missionary efforts across the sea to convert anybody to anything.

And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.

Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Mt 23.30-33

Ancient Jews did not kill the prophets.

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But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Mt 8.12

Jews will go to Hell.

Persecution

But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. Mt 10.17-18

Other than the New Testament, there is no evidence of any organized persecution of Christians by Jews.

Jesus on destroying Jewish cities

11:20 Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not:

11:21 Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

11:22 But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.

11:23 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

11:24 But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee. Mt 11.20-24

Paul on the fate of Jews

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What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness [are not saved]. Wherefore? Because they (the Jews) sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone.... Rom 9.30-32

Jews are damned because they did not become Christians.

But I say, Have (Jews) not heard? Yes verily, their (Christian missionaries') sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. Rom 10.18

Even to China and the New World, America?

But to Israel (to the Jews), he saith All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people. Rom 10.21

(The Jews) Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins always: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost. 1 Thess 2.15-16

Paul thinks that Jews hated all non-Jews and, therefore, did not want Gentiles to be saved. The Jewish Scriptures do not teach that all Gentiles are evil, that only Jews are saved. The only person called messiah in the Scriptures was a Gentile - Cyrus, the King of the Persians.

Seneca on Judaism

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It was imputed as a superstition to the Jews, the forbearance of some sorts of flesh, and my father brought me back again to my old custom, that I might not be thought tainted with their superstition. Seneca
On a Happy Life

Christians On the fate of non-Orthodox Christians (Heretics).

On Heretics

The hatred for the non-Orthodox Christian is clear. Paul, in one of his letters, even says that those who do not accept *his gospel* are condemned to Hell. In short, the salvation of the soul is all that is good and that means that you must be an Orthodox Christian.

Jesus

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Mt 7:15

Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Mt 7:19

Paul

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly.... Rom 16:17-18

But he that is [a Christian] judges all things, yet he himself is judged by no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ. 1 Cor 2:15-16

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Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life? 1 Cor 6:2-3

On Heretics and the Fallen Away

I would they were even cut off [kicked out of the church] which trouble you. Gal 4.12 The New Revised Standard Version: "I wish those who unsettle you would castrate themselves!"

A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sins, being condemned [to Hell] of himself. Titus 3.10-11

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. Hebrews 6.4-6

Those who fall away are doomed to Hell.

Weak Faith

Jesus

8:24 And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep.

8:25 And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish.

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8:26 And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. Mt 8.24-26

On Immoral Christians

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. 1 Cor 6:9-10

Don't associate with sinners (Christians or Pagans).

I wrote unto you in an epistle not to (keep) company with (pagan) fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother (a Christian) be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away (expel) from among yourselves that wicked person. 1 Cor 5.9-13

Christians On Pagans

Jesus

Dogs and the Canaanite Woman: Mt 15.22-28

15:22 And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.

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15:23 But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.

15:24 But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

15:25 Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.

15:26 But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.

15:27 And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.

15:28 Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilst. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour. Mt 15.28

When Christian writers want to argue that the origin of Christianity is not pagan, they turn to the Gospels and insist that Jesus, being typically Jewish, did not like Gentiles. (The fact that ancient Jews did not hate Gentiles is simply ignored.) But the picture of non-Jews in the Gospels is actually quite positive. Apologists simply ignore the praise of Jesus by non-Jews. The centurion who wants his son cured, (Jesus says he is not found such great faith in all of Israel), the centurion soldier at the foot of the cross (surely this must have been the son of God), etc. Even Mr. and Mrs. Pilate testify to the innocence of Jesus at his trial.

The Canaanite Woman: Mt 15.22-28

When the Canaanite woman asks Jesus for help because her daughter is vexed by a devil Jesus is silent. (vss 22-23)

15:24 But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. [The mission of God in the Gospels is to replace Judaism with Christianity

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as we have said above. Jews must break their covenant with God before Gentiles can replace them. Also, see below. For more on this thesis, see *Volume 1 Jesus Christ: A Pagan Myth (3rd expanded edition)*

In this story Jesus is pictured as anti-Gentile by many since he refers to non-Jews as dogs (Mt 15.26). Of course, this ignores verse 27 where, because of the woman's "great faith," Jesus cures her daughter.

Salvation of God is sent to non-Jews

And when they (the Jews of Corinth) ... blasphemed, (Paul) shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads, I am clean, from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles. Acts 18.6

Be it known therefore unto you (Jews), that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it. Acts 28.28

The Jewish Scriptures do not teach that only Jews are saved.

Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. 1 John 2.22

Today that would be about 5 billion people !

And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a (pagan) centurion... (asking Jesus to heal his servant).

And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.

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When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. Mt 8:5-8, 10-12

Jesus adds that many pagans will be saved by converted to Christianity but Jesus adds “But the children of the kingdom (Jews) shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Mt 8.12

If I [Jesus] had not come and spoken unto the, they had not had sin: but now they [pagans] have no (excuse) for their sin. Jn 15.22

Had Jesus preached to *all pagans? Even Alaska?*

And in (the name of Jesus) shall the Gentiles trust. Mt 12:21

Paul Judges Pagans

Shunning

If thy brother shall trespass against thee ... if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen (pagan) man and a publican (to be shunned). Mt 18.15-17

Immorality of Pagans

Paul says pagan homosexuals (including lesbians) “are worthy of death”. Rom 1.26-27

Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, malice, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural

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affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they [pagans] which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. Rom 1.29-32

Socializing with the unclean: pagans etc

Paul

If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. But if any man *way* unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not.... 1 Cor 10. 27-28

Don't eat what is sacrificed to idols if you are told but don't ask.

But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better, neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. 1 Cor 8.8

A Stoic belief: Neutrals, or Indifferents, are items that are irrelevant as regard ethical values – e.g., slave or free, male or female, death, illness, rich or poor, children etc. A basic Stoic belief: e.g., giving money to the poor must benefit the receiver only, never the giver.

Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils. 1 Cor 10.21

Don't dine with pagans.

Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. 1 Cor 10.32-33

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Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? ... Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. 2 Cor 6.14-17

Dare any of you, having a matter against another, to go law before the unjust, and not before the saints? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. 1 Cor 6.1, 6

Damned to Hell

If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha (damned to Hell). 1 Cor 16.22

Non-Christians are going to Hell.

That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Phil 2.10-11

All must become Christians.

Paul's Criticism of Religious Beliefs of Pagans

Many ancient pagans, Greek and Roman, rejected the polytheism of the popular pagan religions, including Plato, Aristotle, the Stoic, Seneca, and others. Diogenes the Cynic "...expressed contempt for the Eleusinian mysteries... his teacher Antisthenes, who attacked all religious conventions including the belief in a multitude of gods, maintained that there existed only one God beyond all visible phenomena." The Sophist and atheist, Protagoras, said, "I am unable to know whether (the

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gods) exist or do not exist, nor what they are like in form; for the factors obstructing knowledge are many: the obscurity of the subject and the shortness of human life." – [From our first book on Jesus, *Jesus Christ: A Pagan Myth - Evidence That Jesus Never Lived.*]

For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. 1 Cor 8:5-6

Most educated Romans believed in only one God.

As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. 1 Cor 8.4

But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. 1 Cor 10.20

Pagan gods are devils. Most educated Romans, for example, philosophers, did not believe in sacrifices.

God

Paul on the Design Argument

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; that they (the pagans) are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened [by god]). Rom 1.20-32

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God has spiritually blinded pagans so they cannot be saved.

For by him (Jesus) were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: Colossians 1.16

It was a common pagan belief that God designed the cosmos from pre-existing matter.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. Genesis 1.1

Later in the OT God is said to have created everything out of nothingness but here in Genesis God designs the Cosmos from pre-existing materials, for example light and darkness. Apparently, the belief that matter is eternal was a widely held belief in the ancient world as was the belief that God or gods designed the universe.

Paul argues that the design of the Cosmos proves that God exists, so pagans have no excuse for not believing in God. Of course, the order of the cosmos does not prove that God exists. It could have been designed by multiple gods or a single God that did not have infinite power. If we found a watch in a forest, would that prove that the creator of the time piece was a being of infinite power and intelligence? Indeed, as David Hume pointed out, the creator would not have to be intelligent at all; spiders have little intelligence and yet produce webs with elaborate designs.

Pagans on God

Every man knows without telling, that this wonderful fabric of the universe is not without a governor; and

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that a constant order cannot be the work of chance: for the parts would then fall foul one upon another. The motions of the stars, and their influences, are acted by the command of an eternal decree. Seneca *Epistle 26*

Seneca and others used the Design Argument to prove that Nature [God] exists.

Epicurus, the atheist, rejected The Design Argument as does modern science in favor of the Natural Law argument [Natural law determines the order of the universe.]

It is not possible for us to comprehend what the Power is which has made all things Seneca

We are all of us, however, thus far agreed, first, in the acknowledgment and belief of that almighty Being; and, secondly, that we are to ascribe to it all majesty and goodness. Seneca

Well, not all of us today agree, nor did all agree in the ancient world.

Think of God (Nature or Reason) oftener than thou breaths. Epictetus, *Fragments*, cxiv.

There it is that we are taught to understand what is the matter of the world, and who is the author and preserver of it. What God himself is; and whether he be aware of the existence of human beings or not. Does he still run the universe? (Is he) a part of the world, or the world itself.... And what is God? An immense and an almighty power; great, without limits; and he does whatsoever pleases him. Seneca

The Christian God also does whatever he wants to do. He condemns non-Christians and unbaptized babies to Hell, etc.

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That almighty power is all that we do see, and all that we do not see. What is the difference between the divine nature and ours? Man is compounded, and his best part is his mind ; but the Almighty is all mind, and all reason.... Seneca

The all rational God must have been made of “refined matter” since the Stoics believed that all things were made of matter including God and souls.

Would not a man bless himself at the sight of such an object, as at the encounter of some supernatural power? A power so miraculous, that it is a kind of charm upon the souls of those that are truly affected. (Unless that soul is in the Christian Hell.) Seneca *On a Happy Life*. Chapter 3

Supernatural power: Despite their use of religious language, the Stoics believed the Cosmos is God and is material, not supernatural; and is not personal; atoms do not hear prayers.

Stoics on Judging People

For the Stoics, the brotherhood included all humans with the possible exception of the irredeemably evil (Hitler, etc.). For the Stoics, virtue is, itself, salvation, the only good. The good and the bad both perish at death. The Stoics had no need of Hell.

Pagans on Judging People

Nothing is so much to be avoided in doing good as pride. Seneca, *On Benefits*, ii, 11.

Admit that you are nobody, and know nothing. Epictetus, *Discourses*, ii, 1.

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Let us satisfy our consciences, and do nothing for the sake of reputation. Seneca, *On Anger*, iii, 41.

Simple and modest is the work of philosophy. Draw me not aside to insolence and pride. M. Aurelius, ix, 28.

An adviser ought in the first place to have a regard to the delicacy and sense of shame of the person admonished. Epictetus, *Fragments*, cl.

Nothing is more becoming in a ruler than to despise no one, and never to be insolent. Epictetus, *Fragments*, cxxvii.

If thou wouldst be well spoken of, learn to speak well of others. Epictetus, *Enchiridion*, vi.

When thou art offended with any man's transgression, presently reflect upon thyself, and consider what thou thyself art guilty of in the same kind. M. Aurelius, x, 30.

Take care that thou be far removed from the things thou findest fault within another. Plutarch, *On the Use of Enemies*, iv.

Whenever Plato was among evil-doers, he was wont to ask himself: Do I myself perchance have the same vice? Plutarch, *On the Usefulness of Enemies*, iv.

Thou wilt commit the fewest faults in judging if thou art faultless in thy own life. Epictetus, *Fragments*, lvii.

If we would be righteous judges, let us first persuade ourselves that none of us is blameless. Seneca, *On Anger*, ii, 28.

Stoic Universal Brotherhood

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Nature is bountiful: but anger is pernicious: for it is not fear, but mutual love that binds up mankind. Seneca, *On Anger* Chapter 5

It is not money or possessions that makes a man considerable, but his virtue. It is every man's duty to make himself profitable to mankind: if he can, to many; if not, to fewer; if not so neither, to his neighbor; but, however, to himself. When he is no longer a citizen, he is yet a man; but the whole world is his country
Seneca *On a Happy Life*

Do good to humanity was the central Stoic belief.

All (are) children of god, and that god is the father of gods and men.... Epictetus, the Stoic

The immortal Gods love us, and -- which is the greatest honour we could have -- have placed us next to themselves. Seneca, *On Benefits*, ii, 29

All good men are equal, that is to say ... they are good; but yet one may be young, another old; one may be rich, another poor; one eminent and powerful, another unknown and obscure. Seneca *On a Happy Life*

A good man is not only the friend of God, but the very image, the disciple, and the imitator of him, and true child of his heavenly Father. Seneca *Epistle* 26

(Virtue) is the same in a rich man as in a poor (man); in a sickly man as in a sound; in a strong (man) as in a weak Seneca *On a Happy Life*

But we live as if a servant (slave) were not made of the same materials with his master, or to breathe the same air, or to live and die under the same conditions. The

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body of a servant may be bought and sold, but his mind is free. Seneca *Epistle* 19

It is forbidden to hurt a man; for he is your fellow citizen in the city of the world. Seneca, *On Anger*, ii, 31.

It is virtue, not pedigree, that renders a man either valuable or happy. ... It is the saying of a great man, that if we could trace our descents, we should find all slaves to come from princes, and all princes from slaves. Seneca *Epistle* 17

Wilt thou not bear with thy own brother, who hath God for his Father? Epictetus, *Discourses*, i, 52.

If thou dost happen to be placed in some high station wilt thou not remember what thou art, and over whom thou ... rule that they are by nature thy relatives, thy brothers that they are the offspring of God? Epictetus, *Discourses*, i, 14.

The good man is the pupil and follower, and real child of God. Seneca, *On Providence*, i, 5.

Conclusion: Stoic Universal Love is inclusive. Christian Love is limited to Orthodox Christians

Quotes below are from: *Roman Christianity and Roman Stoicism: A Comparative Study of Ancient Morality* by Runar M. Thorsteinsson Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010 pp 13-14:

Stoicism was the most popular school in Rome by the mid-first century BC. Stoicism reached the lower classes through public lecture rooms and street corners. During the reign of Nero the Stoics were about the only critics of the government. Nero put to death: Rubellius Plautus, Barea Soranus, and Thrasea Paetus. Also, the

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famous poet Lucan and his teacher died under Nero, as well as Seneca. Also, a number of other Stoics were exiled from Rome under Nero.

Thorsteinsson holds that the major difference between Roman Stoicism and Roman Christianity is that the pagan philosophy teaches universal love and Christianity restricts love to Christians, that is to believers. The author is comparing Roman Stoicism with Roman Christianity (using Stoic writings, and Romans and 1 Peter in the New Testament, and also 1 Clement.) We agree with his conclusion and would add that it is in harmony with the rest of the New Testament documents. We did not find a whole lot of passages which urged kindness towards outsiders, that is, Jews, pagans, or heretical Christians.

According to the Stoics, all human beings belong to the family of humankind. Most humans are limited in their moral capacity but the Stoics had no eternal punishment, no Hell. For the Christians only a few of the Orthodox Christians are saved. Everybody else is doomed. Sin and death remain for both Christians and Stoics.

For the Stoics, the brotherhood included all humans with the possible exception of the wholly evil (Hitler etc.). For the Stoics, virtue is, itself, salvation, the only good. The good and the bad both perish at death. The Stoics had no need of Hell.

CHAPTER 6 PREDESTINATION

With Divine Trickery God Forces All Into Hell or Heaven. Traits Shared by Christianity, Plato and the Stoics.

For the Christians this is the “Solution” to the problem of sin and death.

According the New Testament, before the foundation of the world, God decided that most people would be damned to Hell and the rest would get a trip to Heaven. All people are forced by God into Hell or Heaven. There is no free will. We know that many modern Christians believe in free will, that people freely choose to sin and thus deserve to go to Hell. The New Testament is not very consistent about Free Will but the preponderance of the evidence found in the Christian Scriptures indicates that predestination was God's plan. One could argue that people have free will. But God uses Divine trickery on those he has damned so that they will not choose Jesus and thus be saved. This dogma was held by the Christian church for over 1000 years and is held by many Protestants even to this day.

But let us see what Jesus and Paul have to say about God forcing people to Hell.

Jesus

For many are called, but few are chosen. Mt 22:14, 20:16

Paul and Others

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and

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without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will Eph 1:4-5

God is all powerful. Nothing occurs unless God wills it. We saw above that this leads to the Problem of Evil and a lot of silly arguments trying to excuse God for bringing evil into the world. The Christians apparently got these arguments from the Stoics who had been around for 300 years. Like the Christians, the Stoics argued that God allows people to suffer and die of cancer so that others may observe their agony and thus learn that suffering and death are neither good nor evil. Thus, they could learn how to be virtuous!

If the Christians had to choose between the power, the knowledge or the goodness of God, they always chose power.

Paul argues that God is good but for the Apostle to the Gentiles the power of God trumps everything else. Power is far more important than goodness or reason. God is the boss. He forces all into Hell or Heaven, picks who is saved and who is condemned. There is no free will as this would limit the power of God.

According as he hath chosen us (to be saved) in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.... Eph 1:4-5

Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant (of Jews) according to the election of grace. Rom 11:5

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A few Jews have been chosen by God to be saved (by converting to Christianity).

And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed. ACTS 13:47-48 Those who are predestined to go to Heaven are also predestined to believe.

Knowing, brethren beloved, your election (by) God. 1 Thess 1.4

For whom he did forknow, he also did predestine to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestine, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. Rom 8:29-30

For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calls (one to faith).... Rom 9.11

What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For (God) saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. Rom 9.14-15

God will pick those that he wants to send to Heaven or to Hell.

But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation. 2 Thess 2:13

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Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.... 2 Tim 1:9

But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.... 1 Pet 1.19-20

Even the death of Jesus is preordained.

Thomas Paine on Paul's view of predestination

[NOTE: Reprinted from an *Appendix to Paine's Theological Works*, published in London, by Mary Ann Carlile, in 1820.]

Remarks on Romans 9. 18-21

9:18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.

9:19 Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?

9:20 Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?

9:21 Hath no the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonor?

Addressed to the Ministers of the Calvinistic Church

PAUL, in speaking of God, says, "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will be hardeneth. Thou wilt say, why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay, but who art thou, O man, that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed Say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me

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thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?"

I shall leave it to Calvinists and Universalists to wrangle about these expressions, and to oppose or corroborate them by other passages from other books of the Old or New Testament. I shall go to the root at once, and say, that the whole passage is presumption and nonsense. Presumption, because it pretends to know the private mind of God: and nonsense, because the cases it states as parallel cases have no parallel in them, and are opposite cases.

The first expression says, "Therefore hath he (God) mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." As this is ascribing to the attribute of God's power, at the expense of the attribute of his justice, I, as a believer in the justice of God, disbelieve the assertion of Paul. The Predestinarians, of which the loquacious Paul was one, appear to acknowledge but one attribute in God, that of power, which may not improperly be called the Physical attribute. The Deists, in addition to this, believe in his moral attributes, those of justice and goodness.

In the next verses, Paul gets himself into what in vulgar life is called a hobble, and he tries to get out of it by nonsense and sophistry; for having committed himself by saying that "God hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth," he felt the difficulty he was in, and the objections that would be made, which he anticipates by saying, "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he (God) yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will? Nay, but, O man, who art thou, that repliest against God! "This is neither answering the question, nor explaining the case. It is down right

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quibbling and shuffling off the question, and the proper retort upon him would have been, "Nay, but who art thou, presumptuous Paul, that puttest thyself in God's place!" Paul, however, goes on and says, "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou, made me thus?" Yes, if the thing felt itself hurt, and could speak, it would say it. But as pots and pans have not the faculty of speech, the supposition of such things speaking is putting nonsense in the place of argument, and is too ridiculous even to admit of apology. It shows to what wretched shifts sophistry will resort.

Paul, however, dashes on, and the more he tries to reason the more he involves himself, and the more ridiculous he appears. "Hath not," says he, "the potter power over the clay of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor"? In this metaphor, and a most wretched one it is, Paul makes the potter to represent God; the lump of clay the whole human race; the vessels unto honor those souls "on whom he hath mercy because he will have mercy;" and the vessels unto dishonor, those souls "whom he hardeneth (for damnation) because he will harden them." The metaphor is false in every one of its points, and if it admits of any meaning or conclusion, it is the reverse of what Paul intended and the Calvinists understand.

In the first place a potter doth not, because he cannot, make vessels of different qualities, from the same lump of clay; he cannot make a fine china bowl, intended to ornament a side-board, from the same lump of clay that he makes a coarse pan, intended for a close-stool. The potter selects his clays for different uses, according to their different qualities, and degrees of fineness and goodness.

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Paul might as well talk of making gun-flints from the same stick of wood of which the gun-stock is made, as of making china bowls from the same lump of clay of which are made common earthen pots and pans. Paul could not have hit upon a more unfortunate metaphor for his purpose, than this of the potter and the clay; for if any inference is to follow from it, it is that as the potter selects his clay for different kinds of vessels according to the different qualities and degrees of fineness and goodness in the clay, so God selects for future happiness those among mankind who excel in purity and good life, which is the reverse of predestination.

In the second place there is no comparison between the souls of men, and vessels made of clay; and, therefore, to put one to represent the other is a false position. The vessels, or the clay they are made from, are insensible of honor or dishonor. They neither suffer nor enjoy. The clay is not punished that serves the purpose of a close-stool, nor is the finer sort rendered happy that is made up into a punch-bowl. The potter violates no principle of justice in the different uses to which he puts his different clays; for he selects as an artist, not as a moral judge; and the materials he works upon know nothing, and feel nothing, of his mercy or his wrath. Mercy or wrath would make a potter appear ridiculous, when bestowed upon his clay. He might kick some of his pots to pieces.

But the case is quite different with man, either in this world or the next. He is a being sensible of misery as well as of happiness, and therefore Paul argues like an unfeeling idiot, when he compares man to clay on a potter's wheel, or to vessels made therefrom: and with respect to God, it is an offence to his attributes of justice, goodness, and wisdom, to suppose that he

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would treat the choicest work of creation like inanimate and insensible clay. If Paul believed that God made man after his own image, he dishonours it by making that image and a brick-bat to be alike.

The absurd and impious doctrine of predestination, a doctrine destructive of morals, would never have been thought of had it not been for some stupid passages in the Bible, which priestcraft at first, and ignorance since, have imposed upon mankind as revelation. Nonsense ought to be treated as nonsense, wherever it be found; and had this been done in the rational manner it ought to be done, instead of intimating and mincing the matter, as has been too much the case, the nonsense and false doctrine of the Bible, with all the aid that priestcraft can give, could never have stood their ground against the divine reason that God has given to man.

Doctor Franklin gives a remarkable instance of the truth of this, in an account of his life, written by himself. He was in London at the time of which he speaks. "Some volumes," says he, "against Deism, fell into my hands. They were said to be the substance of Sermons preached at Boyle's Lectures. It happened that they produced on me an effect precisely the reverse of what was intended by the writers; for the arguments of the Deists, which were cited in order to be refuted, appeared to me more forcible than the refutation itself. In a word I soon became a perfect Deist." -- New York Edition of Franklin's Life, page 93.

All America, and more than all America, knows Franklin. His life was devoted to the good and improvement of man. Let, then, those who profess a different creed, imitate his virtues, and excel him if they can.

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THE "LIBERAL" IMAGE OF JESUS

But if God forces all Into Hell or Heaven, what happens to the liberal view that Jesus loves everyone and so most would go to Heaven. Well, let us take a look at the liberal image of Jesus.

Critical Evaluation of the Modern "Liberal" Image of Jesus:

The Modern "Liberal" Image of Jesus: Christ is seen as a loving human being. He is all inclusive: he includes women, the poor, the ill, those possessed by Devils; some say that he also includes Jews! Liberals don't talk much about the fascination of Jesus with Hell; some even deny the existence of Hell. Some liberals even maintain that non-Christians go to heaven. We do not know if they believe that atheists go to Heaven. (We asked a fundamentalist whether atheists would go to Hell. She merely said that would be up to God.) Some liberal Christians even denied the divinity of Jesus as Isaac Newton did. The liberal image of the loving Jesus is quite admirable. Maybe that is why your humble editors get along so well with liberal Christians.

There remains, of course, one fundamental problem with this loving Jesus. Does he bear any resemblance to the Jesus of the Gospels?

The Gospel of Mark

To answer this question we have largely used the Gospel of Mark. We have used this gospel since it is the earliest one, having been written about 70 CE according to modern biblical scholars. It was the source material for the Gospels of Matthew and Luke and probably John. Nobody knows the actual author of any of the Gospels. Mark 16.9-20 was added to the original gospel. All

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quotes are the King James version of the Bible, unless otherwise noted.

All Forgiving

All Loving vs Hateful

Champion of Outcasts (women, the poor, the ill, those possessed by devils etc.)

Contradictions of Jesus

Deception by Jesus

Divinity or Humanity of Christ

End of the Gospel of Mark

End of the World

Non-Christians who do not convert to Christianity

Sex , Marriage, Divorce

Miscellaneous

All Forgiving

But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation. Mk 3:29

All Loving: was he?

Jews

Mk 7.9-10: “Jesus criticizes the Jews for not killing their disobedient children according to Old Testament law.”
SAB

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7:5 Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?

7:6 He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

7:7 Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. Mk 7.5-7

7:25 For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet:

7:26 The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.

7:27 But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs. Mk 7.25-27

Mk 8.11-12 And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him. And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation (of Jews) seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation.

Mk 12.38-40

And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces,

And the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts:

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Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.

Mk 15.1 And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate. (Later editors of the Gospels knew that the Jews could not try a man for treason. So, here the Jewish authorities turned him over to Pilate who could try a man who falsely claimed to be King of the Jews. Thus, although the Jews do not actually kill Jesus they are, according to the Gospels, guilty of engineering his death. As Pontius Pilate publicly declares Jesus innocent, the Jews of the bad guys. They're guilty of deicide and are still held to be guilty of killing God even to this day.)

Animals.

And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea. Mk 5.13 (Mk 5.11-17). Rough on animals.

Family

Mk 3.31-34

There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him.

And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee.

And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren?

JESUS AND PLATO ON HELL

And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! Mk 3.31-34 Rough on mothers and other family members.

Mk 10.28-30

Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee.

And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's,

But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. Mk 10.28-30 A hundred mothers? Eternal life? So, are all souls mortal? Do all souls perish if they do not convert to Christianity?

Pagans

Mk 7.25-27

7:25 For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet:

7:26 The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.

7:27 But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs. (We see that Jesus has no compassion for the mother who has a daughter who is

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possessed by a devil. Rather, he cures the daughter because of the mother's wit in verses 28-29.)

Non-Christians who do not convert to Christianity

Mk 6.11 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.

Any city that does not receive the followers of Jesus will be punished worse than Sodom and Gomorrah. The followers of Jesus would be a reference to early Christians missionaries. The Gospel writers sought to justify many of the later beliefs and practices of the early church.

Contradictions of Jesus

Jesus says that John the Baptist is Elias (risen from the dead) but in Jn 1.21 John the Baptist denies this.

Mk 9.13 But I say unto you, That Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him.

Jn 1:21 And they asked him (John the Baptist), What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.

Crucifixion

Mk 14.34-35 In the Garden Jesus is humble. He prays that God may save him from the crucifixion. And saith unto them (his disciples), My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch. And he went

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forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.

But in verse 36 he goes back to being less humble.

Mk 14.36 And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.

(Now he is the (only) Son of God. See Mk 14.61-62: But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.)

Last Words on the Cross

Mk 15.34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

Here, Jesus is not humble. Indeed, one could take his words as displaying anger against God, as blasphemy. Almost all scholars take Mk 16.9-20 as a late addition to the gospel. Thus, the original Mark ended with the empty tomb and some even think the Gospel ended with these last words on the cross. In any case, it would seem that Jesus dies thinking that he is failed in his mission. For more on this, see our first book on Jesus, *Jesus Christ: A Pagan Myth - Evidence That Jesus Never Lived.*

Deception by Jesus

Mk 4:10-12 And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable.

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4:11 And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables:
4:12 That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them. Mk 10-12

Jesus deceives people so they will go to Hell.

Disciples

Mk 9.17-19 And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit;

And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.

He answereth him, and saith (of the disciples) , O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me.

Divinity or Humanity of Christ

In Mark there is no virginal conception. The Holy Spirit is not the father and thus Jesus is not divine or semidivine. However, the “unclean spirits” at Chapter 3.11 know that he is “the son of God”.

Mk 8.27-28

And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am?

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And they answered, John the Baptist (risen from the dead); but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets.

Was Jesus God?

YES:

Mark

Mk 2.7 Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?

Mk 2.10 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,)

Mk 5.6-7 But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him, And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.

John

Jn 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Jn 1:14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. (the only begotten of the Father- a second God? The second person of the Trinity? Editors)

Jn 10:30 I and my Father are one.

Jn 20.28 And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

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Jn 2:31 But these are written, that ye might that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

NO:

Mark

Mk 10.18 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.

Mk 15.34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

Jesus went to Heaven. Mk 16.19 So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

John

Jn 20:17 Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

End of the Gospel of Mark (Mk 16.9-20) (added by a later editor to the original gospel.)

Mk 16.14-20

The resurrection appearance of Jesus. Mk 16.14

16:15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

16:16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

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16:17-18 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

16:18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

16:19 So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

16:20 And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen. Mk 16.14-20

End of the World

And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power. Mk 9.1

Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done. Mk 9.30

But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Mk 9.32

Jesus wrongly predicts the end of the world will come in the current generation – (9.1, 9.30). But a later editor has added verse 32 stating that no one knows when the world will come to an end except God. But the final editors did not omit 9.1 and 9.30, thus leaving an embarrassment for the Christians.

Mk 13:26 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. (No humble of Jesus here.)

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Mk 13.26

Hell

Liberal Christians today picture Jesus as loving and inclusive. Who does Jesus say go to Hell? Nearly everyone. Most Orthodox Christians, all heretics, and all non-Christians!

All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. Mt 11:27

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. 1 Cor 12.12-13 Jews and pagans can be saved – if they convert to Christianity. Otherwise, they get a trip to Hell. This includes unbaptized babies.

When defending universal salvation, most people use Jn 3.16. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Well, God may have loved the world but it is not willing to saved him from Hell a most they became Orthodox Christians. See Jn 3.17 ... he that believeth not is condemned, ... It would have been simpler for an all forgiving and all loving God with infinite power to forgive all and send all to Heaven. Mk 10.45 has Jesus say but Christ came" to give his life, a ransom for many," not for all.

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As for Orthodox Christians, Jesus said only a few people will be saved. Mt 22.14 For many are called, but few are chosen.

The Rich

Mk 10.23-25

And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!

It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

Humbleness:

Jesus enters Jerusalem

Mk 11.9-10 And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord:

Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.

The parable of the vineyard Mk 12.1-11

The mission of Jesus does not involve any humility. He is a supersessionist; he has come to replace Judaism with Christianity. When the Jews engineered the death

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of Jesus non-Jews replace them as the chosen people of God. This is this is God's plan which Jesus is carrying out. Mk 12.1-11

Mk 14.21 The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born. [Hardly humble.]

Mk 14.22-24 And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body.

And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it.

And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.

Spiritual cannibalism. His bloody death on the cross is the ultimate blood sacrifice. In any case, the humble Jesus has gone. This sort of God creates the sacrament which Christians will observe it at the holy mass.

Outcasts (women, the poor, the ill, those possessed by devils, etc.)

Mk 14.3-7 The Poor

And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head. (Lepers were not allowed within cities.)

And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made?

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For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her. (The only passage that indicates that Jesus or his disciples gave any money to the poor. In the rich man story Jesus merely indicates that he should give his money to the poor and then follow Jesus, not that the money should be given to the group who would then give it the poor.)

And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me.

For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always. (The poor will always be with you; there is here no concern for eliminating poverty.)

Mk 14.3-7 Anointing Jesus is more important than feeding the poor.

Compassion

Mk 1:41-42 And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean. And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.

(1:41) "*Jesus, moved with compassion*"

Some manuscripts say that Jesus was moved with anger, not compassion. Bart Ehrman in *Misquoting Jesus* (p.133-138) argues that the original text probably said that Jesus reacted with wrath rather than compassion, and was later changed by scribes to make the verse less problematic." SAB

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Mk 8.1-2 In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples unto him, and saith unto them, I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat (This is a really rare occasion when Jesus says he has compassion for anyone.)

Women

Women and the Empty Tomb

Mk 16:7 But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.

This is sometimes used by liberals and feminists to put show the prominent role that women played in early Christianity.

But look at the next verse:

Mk 16.8 And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they anything to any man; for they were afraid.

True, at Mk 16.9 we see that Jesus first appears to Mary Magdalene. But as we pointed out above, 16.9-20 was not written by Mark. Also, it is impossible to reconcile the resurrection appearances of the four Gospels (Mk 19.9, Mt 28.1,9, Lk 24.13-31, Jn 20.11-14) to say nothing of Paul in 1 Cor 15.4-5. For more, see our first book on Jesus.

Sex, Marriage, Divorce

No sex or marriage in heaven

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For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven. (Mk 12.18-25)

Mk 6.3b Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him. (But the Catholic church holds that Mary was a perpetual virgin.) SAB

Divorce

Mk 10.11 And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her.

Mk 10.12 And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.

Mt 19:6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

Lk 16.18 Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.

Divorce only when wife commits adultery:

Mt 5.32 But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away *his wife*, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

Mt 19.9 And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry

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another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

Pagan/Christian Marriage:

1 Cor 7.15 But if the unbelieving (pagan) depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace.

Note in verse 14 that that the Christian partner in the interfaith marriage makes the children of such a marriage clean. I guess that makes pagan children unclean.

Seneca: Predestination - No Free Will.

Nature does what it initially determined; nothing in nature's doings is AD HOC Seneca *Epistle 25*

No free will.

Free Will is determined by Fate

Such a man shall be rich if he betake himself to navigation: but the same fate that promises him a great estate appoints also that he shall sail, and therefore he puts to sea. It is the same case in expiations; a man shall avoid dangers, if he can by his prayers avoid the threatenings of divine vengeance: but this is part of his fate also that he shall so do, and therefore he does it. These arguments are made use of to prove, that there is nothing left to our will, but that we are all overruled by fatalities. When we come to handle that matter, we shall show the consistency of free-will with fate, having already made it appear that notwithstanding the certain order of fate, judgments may be averted by prayers and supplications, and without any repugnancy to fate; for

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they are part even of the law of fate itself. Seneca *Epistle 25*

We may pray to avert some disaster but Fate determines that we should pray. Free will exists but it is caused by Fate!

If it be the pleasure of God to take my children... my fortune, any part of my body, or my life. I am ready to part with all, and to suffer all; for I know that nothing comes to pass but what God appoints: our fate is decreed ... and every man's portion of joy and sorrow is predetermined (by God, Nature or Reason. No free will.)
Seneca *On a Happy Life*

Divine Trickery: God forces all into Hell or Heaven using Divine Deception

On top of everything else, the New Testament states that God has spiritually blinded people in order to accomplish his purposes. God hardens the heart (brain) of people so they will not see the truth and be saved, thus defeating God's plan. Before the world was created God determined that humans would be deceived by him and would sin. Then, having been tricked into to sinning, the vast majority of humans are to be condemned to Hell – and a few are sent to Heaven.

Jesus

Jesus Spiritually blinds Jews so they will not be saved.

Jesus preaches to people in parables so that they will not understand and be saved.

(Jesus speaks to his disciples.) Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without (Jews and non-Jews?) , all these

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things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them. In Mk 4:11-12

All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world. Mt 13:34-35

And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. Mt 13:10-11

Therefore, speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart (brain), and should be converted, and I should heal them (save them). Mt 13:13-15

He hath blinded (Jewish) eyes, and hardened their hearts; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. Jn 12:39-40

God hardened the hearts of the Jews to prevent them from believing in Jesus and thus be saved.

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Paul

Romans 11.5, 7, 10, 11

Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant (a few people) according to the election of grace (which God has chosen). 11.5

What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election (non-Jews?) hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded. 11.7

Election: God has selected those non-Jews (?) who are to be saved. God blinds those who he does not want to be saved. There is no free will involved.) 11:10

Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see ... 11:11

I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.

(Easy-to-Read Version: Rom 11.11-12

So I ask: When the Jews fell, did that fall destroy them? No! But their mistake brought salvation to those who are not Jews. The purpose of this was to make the Jews jealous. Their mistake brought rich blessings to the world. And what they lost brought rich blessings to the non-Jewish people. (So surely the world will get much richer blessings when enough Jews become the kind of people God wants.)

That blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. Rom 11.25

Spiritually blinded by God, the Jews were not able to see that Jesus was “the Messiah.” The remnant of Rom

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11.5 does not indicate that all Jews will eventually be saved as some apologists argue – after the death camps of World War II. The writers of the New Testament were simply anti-Jewish.)

Paul

So then he has mercy on whomever he chooses, and he hardens the heart of whomever he chooses. Rom 9:18 (RSV)

Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that (disagrees with God)? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.... Rom 9:19-22

The created have no right to complain when in order to show his power the Creator saves some and condemned others.

Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded. ... God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day. ... Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see. -- Rom 11:7-10

And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. But we are bound to give thanks

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always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: 2 Thess 2.11-13

More Divine Deception: allegorical or symbolic interpretation.

Often the OT is meant to be interpreted symbolically. The literal meaning is relatively unimportant. God is protecting the truth from those who are not meant to know the truth.

For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. Gal 4:22-26

In this allegory the one son symbolizes the Gentiles who are saved and the other represents the Jews who are not saved. Allegory or symbolic interpretation made it easy to make the Jewish Scriptures (OT) say what the Christians wanted it to say. For another example, consider that a tree was interpreted as referring to the wooden cross on which Christ was crucified, thus "proving" that the Jewish Scriptures predicted centuries in advance, that Jesus Christ would be crucified. Also, that water in the Jordan River was thought to predict the coming of Christian baptism as a saving ritual.

Rejecting the philosophers and other educated people.

At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Mt 11.25

This was probably to explain why the early Christians were pretty uneducated – like "babes". Witness the relatively barbaric Greek of Mark's Gospel.

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Pagan

Christians were not the only ones who allegorized Writings.

Chrysippus, head of the Stoic school in 232 BCE, used allegorical or symbolic interpretation in an attempt to prove that Homer and Hesiod were actually Stoics. The Stoics rearrange “the letters in the name of the goddess Hera (giving) the word for air.” (From our book *Jesus Christ: A Pagan Myth - Evidence That Jesus Never Lived*).

“God says: What complaint against me have ye who follow righteousness? Others I have surrounded with false goods, and have deluded their vain minds with a long and deceptive dream but within they are miserable, sordid, base, adorned only outwardly like their walls. Theirs is not a solid and genuine happiness: it is encrusted, and that but thinly.” Seneca, *On Providence*, vi, 3.

TRAITS OF CHRISTIANITY, SENECA AND PLATO

Jesus and Paul believed in proselytizing, and posited founders whose teachings were passed down as did the pagan philosophers.

Conscience

Both saw conscience as the source of ethical truth. Both believed in an examination of conscience.

Cosmos:

Christian: The Christians believed that matter was unreal and spirit was real and eternal. The aim of life was to leave the body and be in the presence of God in Heaven.

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Plato: "Platonism" is a term coined by scholars to refer to the intellectual consequences of denying, as Socrates often does, the reality of the material world.... [*Platonic realism* From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia] Well, at least Plato believed that the material world was less real than the supernatural one. The aim of life was to leave the body and go to Heaven.

Plato invented or at least popularized the idea of spirit which Aristotle rejected and the Christians accepted.

Stoic: The Cosmos was made of atoms and void (space).

Death

Christian: Death is separation of the body from the soul.

Plato: Same.

Stoic: The refined atoms of the soul survive death but there is no personal survival. The atoms merely intermingle with the cosmos.

All three would agree that one must not fear suffering or death in the pursuit of truth. All three would approve of martyrdom but only the Christians made a virtue of suffering and death, of martyrdom itself.

Divine Plan

Christian: Humans do not know the complete divine plan until Heaven. For instance, the birth of a child with a fatal defect or two heads will cause many Christians to have doubts about the goodness of God especially if the child is their own. God is the source only of goodness. Even what is evil will eventually produce goodness whether human beings see this or not. Christians are reminded that God works in mysterious ways.

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Plato: Same.

Stoic: Humans can use Reason but they do not know the complete plan of Nature (Reason or God).

Free Will Vs Fate

Christians, Plato And Seneca: All three have inconsistent and even contradictory views about free will and fate.

God:

Christian: God is a supernatural being; he created the Cosmos out of nothing. He created humans. He is a personal God; he hears prayers etc. After death the all good God provides eternal torture in Hell for most and for a few, eternal bliss in Heaven. In short, manmade God in his own image.

Plato: Same.

Stoic: Nature or Reason is God. It is non-supernatural and impersonal (it does not know that humans exist). There is no life after death. The goal is imitate Nature, God, Reason or Zeus, to achieve virtue or wisdom through reason. Nature is all beneficent and thus we should imitate Nature by doing good for humanity. The Stoic denied that evil exists in order to defend the goodness of God as Plato and the Christians did. God kills some people so that others will learn that suffering and death are not really evil but neutrals etc.

Governmental Rulers

Christian: God sternly commands us to obey rulers since God has appointed them. 1 Pet 2.13-14,17 Including Caligula.

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God also knows how to punish those who “despise government”. The Lord knoweth how ... to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished: But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. 2 Pet 2:9-10

Stoic: Fate determines all things including those who are going to be rulers, so we should willingly obey. Seneca

Indifferents (Neutrals)

Christian: Whether you were a slave or free, male or female, rich or poor or whether your eyes were blue or brown were neutral as regard salvation. All were moral indifferents. They do not matter to the Christians. For more than 1500 years they did nothing to abolish slavery or serfdom.

Plato: Plato was a sexist man. Plato did not hold women (putting aside Guardian class in the *Republic*) as equals. As regards slaves the same is true. Indeed, he argues that all should maintain the big lie: slaves are so by nature.

Inconsistently, Plato and Aristotle argued that slaves were natural but they also argued that they were slaves by convention, captured in the war, etc.

Stoic: Stoics saw externals as neutral or indifferent, playing no role in the achievement of virtue (salvation). Examples of externals would be marriage, children, wealth, politics, as well as whether one was a Greek or barbarian, slave or free, male or female. They were much more sympathetic to women and slaves than either Plato or the Christians. Also, non-Stoics could be saved i.e. achieve virtue without “converting” to stoicism.

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Love

Christian: Platonic love is demanded for Orthodox Christians only; it is not required that you love humanity in general.

Plato: One has the feeling that Plato would only demand love for fellow Platonists.

Stoic: Love humanity. However, Seneca wrote that the evil person leads a life of miserable unhappiness.

Marriage

Jesus calls the apostles. They abandon their wives and children and follow him. It is true that he attends the wedding feast at Cana but this is in the very late gospel of John.

Paul:

But if (a man and a woman cannot abstain from sex) let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn (in Hell). 1 Cor 7:9

Marry to avoid the sin of sex outside of marriage. Christians saw sex as interfering with salvation. For over 1500 years the Church taught that the marital state was inferior to the virginal state.

Plato: The philosopher was in the ascetic tradition. He taught that even the philosopher in order to get heaven first had to purify himself as regard the sins of the flesh. He wrote that ignorance and fleshly sins were the cause of philosophical ignorance. See the *Phaedo*.

Stoic: Musonius Rufus (30-101 CE), believed marriage to be a complete (equal) partnership. All Stoics accepted

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marriage, provided it did not interfere with the pursuit of truth, that is, philosophy.

Mediator

Christian: The Gospels see Jesus as an intermediary between God and humanity.

Plato: Socrates is portrayed as a sort of spiritual mediator between God and humanity.

Stoic: Epictetus, though a Stoic, portrays the Cynic as a mediator between god and humanity. The Cynic is a representative of god who has been sent by Zeus to humans to teach them how to live.

Obey God

Christian: Obey God and Jesus or go to hell.

Plato: The ultimate truth is God and we must obey him or go to Hell.

Stoic: Follow (obey) Nature's beneficent rational laws and be happy or live an unhappy evil life. This is as close to Hell as the Stoics ever got.

Outcasts:

Christian: Help the poor, the sick, slaves, and the imprisoned (if they are Christian or may convert?).

Stoic: Be good to all humanity give-and-take the really evil person.

Philosophy

Christian: The Christian believes in divine truth which is derived from the Holy Spirit, the Bible and church teachings. Also, since, all truth comes from God,

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virtually all ancient Christian writers believed that there were germs of truth in all pagan philosophies. Thus, in so far as philosophy could be used to defend the validity of the Christian religion, philosophy was to be admired and accepted as a valuable asset in becoming a true Christian. (Paul aside.)

Plato: Plato was a kind of rational mystic. The Christian depended on a supernatural force. Plato used reason to justify mystical beliefs that he already held to be valid. He was not a philosopher in the true sense of the word in that he did not make a disinterested quest for the truth. But he was not that much different from the Christian who imagines that there is a God who justifies what the Christian already believes, that he can defeat sin and death.

Stoic: The stoics too were bad philosophers insofar as they did not make a disinterested search for the truth. They only sought to justify the humanistic values which they had inherited from Greco-Roman humanism.

Salvation: How and Who Are Saved?

Christian: Sinful humanity needs divine intervention. Faith in Jesus will save some. A few Orthodox Christians will go to Heaven. Most Christians and all non-Christians will go to Hell.

Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. Lk 13.23-24

Stoic: Achieve virtue (moral goodness) through reason. "Follow nature" was the motto of the Stoics. Seneca did not require one to become a Stoic to be saved (to become moral or virtuous). Nevertheless, he saw humanity as mired in sin from which most could not escape.

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Sin

Christian: Sin (disobeying God) is punished here on Earth and in Hell. Humans are almost innately evil but Christians can do good because Christ died to “saved us from our sins.” Devils tempt us to sin.

Plato: Like Jesus and St. Paul, Plato agreed that the flesh and ignorance were obstacles to virtue. Only philosophers who are pure can enter the company of the gods. *Phaedo*

... Votaries of philosophy (must) abstain from all fleshly lusts *Phaedo*

...(W)hile in company with the body, the soul cannot have pure knowledge.... *Phaedo*

Stoic: “Sinning” or not obeying nature or God or Reason. It is caused by passion (excessive emotion), as opposed to reason.

Stoics thought that human beings were born with an inclination to do good to their own kind, to human beings. They argued that since nature is beneficent, that is, good to people we should do good to humanity. Humans could find out what was good and evil through reason, observing nature and from the conscience. However, the flesh and ignorance were obstacles to virtue.

All three believed that most people would not be saved or achieve virtue but Christians were the most exclusive as regards salvation.

Soul

Christian: A Soul is a spiritual non-material and immortal entity. However, note that the NT seems to

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imply that some moderate sinners simply perish, that is become annihilated when the body dies.

Plato: Then, Cebes, beyond question, the soul is immortal and imperishable, and our souls will truly exist in another world! *Phaedo*

Stoic: The soul is made of extremely refined atoms. It dies when the body dies. The atoms of the soul and body are eternal and thus survive the death of the body. But the unity of soul and body do not since they are now disorganized and enter individually into the cosmic mix. Some Stoics believed that after the conflagration (destruction of the world) all will begin again in an endless number of cycles.

Stoic Terminology in Paul:

The Stoics and Paul shared some terminology, Spirit, conscience, *Logos*, virtue, self-sufficiency, freedom of speech, reasonable service, etc. Also, both believed in the human tendency toward evil (stronger in Paul), the need for self-examination, human kinship with the divine, denial of the world's values, and emphasis on inner freedom from external circumstances.

Truth

Christian

The truth comes from the Holy Spirit, Church teachings and the revealed truth contained in the Bible.

Plato

In the culmination of the philosophic path as discussed in Plato's *Symposium* and *Republic*, one comes to the Sea of Beauty or to the sight of the form of the Good in an experience akin to mystical revelation; only then can

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one become wise. ... Socrates from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

In Plato's *Apology of Socrates*, Socrates claimed to have a *daimonion* (literally, a "divine something") that frequently warned him - in the form of a "voice" - against mistakes but never told him what to do. *Daemon* (classical mythology) From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Plato applied reason to mystical beliefs that Plato already held to be true. (Plato) uses intellect to prove conclusions that are to him agreeable, rather than in a disinterested search for knowledge. Bertrand Russell in HWP.

Like Christians, Plato rejected the study of the real world in favor of the nothingness of the supernatural world. Editors.

Socrates is often found arguing that knowledge is not empirical, and that it comes from divine insight. Plato From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Stoic: Stoicism asserts that salvation (virtue) is based on reason.

Women

Christian

(As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that opens the womb (is born) shall be called holy to the Lord....) LK 2.23 (To God males, not females, are holy.)

Plato

Plato was a sexist, as are most people today.

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Stoic

In general Stoics felt that marriage was a good thing, provided it did not interfere with the search for philosophical truth.

The wise man ... would rather not live at all than to give up human companionship. Seneca (referring to marriage.)

Miscellaneous

Christians:

“In the latter times some shall depart from the faith” by “Forbidding to marry, and commanding (people) to abstain from meats” 1 Tim 4:1-4

Christian ethics derived from the pagan morals of Roman Stoicism.

EXCURSUS - LETTERS ON RELIGION BY THOMAS JEFFERSON.

Thomas Jefferson

Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) was the third president of the United States. Like his two predecessors, Washington and John Adams, he was a Deist but (Ed:somewhat gun shy.) While saying that he believed in God and a future life he said also that he was a materialist. “To talk of immaterial existences is to talk of nothings” he wrote to John Adams; and he decries the Christian God as a “hocus pocus phantasm of a God, like another Cebarus, with one body and three heads” (Dec, 8, 1822). The correspondence on religion of these two accomplished men in the line of Presidents is very refreshing. Joseph McCabe

Notes

The year 1800 did not mark the triumph of reason. Jefferson and others still had to remain in the closet, maintaining that they were deists - believers in a non-personal God very much like Nature, not atheists. However, by 1800 there was a return to rational thought and the age of science was developing quickly.

In this chapter we have evaluated the religious views of Thomas Jefferson and noted the views of some other founding fathers of the United States. Here, we see that many of the active founders of the Republic were atheist, agnostics or freethinkers. Thus, it is not surprising that they wanted a wall of separation between religion and the state. Note too, the views of Benjamin Franklin and some presidents including Abraham Lincoln.

THOMAS JEFFERSON LETTERS ON RELIGION

The extracts below are the references to religion which appear in Jefferson's private letters. A glance at his letters makes it clear that he was not an orthodox Christian. Clearly he wanted to keep the cover of Christianity but was he a "Christian" deist or an outright atheist? Many modern scholars assert that he was a deist. We will examine the thesis that Jefferson was an atheist.

In the early 18th century what were the differences between an atheist and a deist? Deists differed a lot from each other. For our purposes let us use Thomas Paine as the model for our deist since he was the best-selling deist of the 18th and early 19th century, and had a big influence on American deism. He was also a close associate of Thomas Jefferson. In addition, as you can tell from his letters, the president was a close associate of Priestly who had religious views close to that of Jefferson. Indeed, Priestly wrote the book, *Jesus and Socrates Compared*, at the request of Jefferson. *The Jefferson Bible* is similar to Priestly's short treatise. Finally, it should be noted that the thought of Priestly and Paine was similar. This is so even though Priestly was angry with Paine because his book, *The Age of Reason*, condemned Christianity. Whereas Priestly and Jefferson wanted to alter and radically reform Christianity in a deist fashion, Paine wished to replace Christianity with a deist religion which he created.

Thomas Paine, Jefferson's Friend

Thomas Paine (1737 -1809) was an English American author, pamphleteer, radical, inventor, intellectual, revolutionary, and one of the Founding Fathers of the United States. ... Born in Thetford, in the English county of Norfolk, Paine immigrated to the British American colonies in 1774 in time to participate in the

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American Revolution. Thomas Paine From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Thomas Paine's Deism

Let us briefly describe Thomas Paine's deism. It is roughly the same as atheism except that Paine accepts the existence of a deity, an impersonal God. It is of like the God of Seneca: Nature or Reason. They both occasionally used ambiguous religious language.

Paine's God, like that of Jefferson's, can be known through reason and science but revelations like the Bible are merely human inventions. Turning water into wine or virginal conceptions (the divinity of Christ) and other miracles are rejected. Prayer is out. Divine Providence is also rejected; Nature is not always beneficent to human beings. God does not directly run the universe which is governed by Natural (scientific) laws. His Deist God designed the universe, and provided natural laws and then went to sleep.

Jefferson's friend, Thomas Paine, takes an agnostic attitude as regards the resurrection of the dead or future life; Paine *hopes* there will be a future life and that he will be happy then. This despite the firm teaching of his church that there is a future life. Paine regards all supernaturally related ideas as superstitions, as inventions of human beings. The clergy have invented all of these items so that they can achieve power through the governments of the world. The American Revolution replaced monarchy with democracy; what remains is the replacement of Christianity with pure deism.

The philanthropy

Beliefs and organization

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Indeed, Paine cofounded in Paris his own church, the Church of Theophilanthropy. “No dogmatic creed was imposed on the adherents of the new religion, the two fundamental tenets, viz. the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, being purely sentimental beliefs (*croyances de sentiment*) deemed necessary for the preservation of society and the welfare of individuals. The moral teaching, considered the principal feature of the movement, held a middle position between the severity of Stoicism and the laxity of Epicureanism. Its basic principle was good: good is all that tends to preserve and perfect the man, evil is all that tends to destroy or impair him. It is in light of that axiom and not of the Christian standard – in spite of the phraseology – that we should view the commandments concerning the adoration of God, the love of our neighbor, domestic virtues and patriotism.”

The essence of Paine's philosophy [religion] is that through reason and science human beings should strive to increase the happiness of humanity. Theophilanthropy [From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia]

Paine's Hostility as Regards Atheism

Of course, atheists vary a lot as to ethics. Some atheists were humanists but others simply accepted the ethical values of the society around them. The 19th Century deist prejudice against atheism probably derives from the general image of atheists as amoral, or at least less interested in moral perfection than deists.

Conclusion

So, essentially the difference between the deist and atheist was that the former believed that God designed the universe whereas most atheists believed that the

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material universe is eternal and thus never had a beginning. Both deists and atheists rejected orthodox Christianity. Thus, what we need to examine in Jefferson's letters is simply whether he did or did not believe in the existence of a deist God or was he an atheist?

Atheism

Atheism can be either the rejection of theism, (a personal god) or the position that deities do not exist. In the broadest sense, it is the absence of belief in the existence of deities. [Wikipedia contributors, "Atheism," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*]

Atheism can be either the rejection of theism, (a personal god) or the position that deities do not exist. In the broadest sense, it is the absence of belief in the existence of deities. [Atheism, Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia]

Jefferson's Religious Views

Millions of innocent men, women and children, since the introduction of Christianity, have been burnt, tortured, fined and imprisoned; yet we have not advanced one inch towards uniformity. [Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on Virginia*, 1782]

But it does me no injury for my neighbor to say there are twenty gods or no God. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg. [Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on Virginia*, 1782]

Where the preamble declares, that coercion is a departure from the plan of the holy author of our religion, an amendment was proposed by inserting "Jesus Christ," so that it would read "A departure from

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the plan of Jesus Christ, the holy author of our religion;" the insertion was rejected by the great majority, in proof that they meant to comprehend, within the mantle of its protection, the Jew and the Gentile, the Christian and Mohammedan, the Hindoo and Infidel of every denomination. [Thomas Jefferson, *Autobiography*, in reference to the Virginia Act for Religious Freedom]

May it be to the world, what I believe it will be, (to some parts sooner, to others later, but finally to all,) the signal of arousing men to burst the chains under which monkish ignorance and superstition had persuaded them to bind themselves, and to assume the blessings and security of self-government. All eyes are opened, or opening, to the rights of man. The general spread of the light of science has already laid open to every view the palpable truth, that the mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor a favored few booted and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, by the grace of God. [Thomas Jefferson, letter to Roger C. Weightman, June 24, 1826 (in the last letter he penned)].

LETTERS OF THOMAS JEFFERSON ON RELIGION

No God

Thomas Jefferson to Peter Carr

(Jefferson's young nephew)

Paris, August 10, 1787.

Question with boldness even the existence of a god; because, if there be one, he must more approve of the homage of reason, than that of blindfolded fear. You will naturally examine first the religion of your own

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country. Read the Bible then, as you would Levy or Tacitus.

Study the Bible objectively as you would any other book. Reason over faith. But those facts in the bible which contradict the laws of nature, must be examined with more care, and under a variety of faces. There are no miracles in nature. Here you must recur to the pretensions of the writer to inspiration from god. Examine upon what evidence his pretensions are founded, and whether that evidence is so strong as that its falsehood would be more improbable than a change in the laws of nature in the case he relates. For example in the book of Joshua we are told the sun stood still several hours. Question claims of divine inspiration on the part of the author.

You will next read the New Testament. It is the history of a personage called Jesus. Keep in your eye the opposite ... of those who say he was begotten by god, born of a virgin, suspended and reversed the laws of nature at will, and ascended bodily into heaven....

Do not be frightened from this inquiry by fear of its consequences. If it ends in a belief that there is no god, you will find incitements to virtue in the comfort and pleasantness you feel in its exercise, and the love of others which it will procure you.

In fine, I repeat that you must lay aside all prejudice on both sides, and neither believe nor reject anything because any other person, or description of persons have rejected or believed it. Your own reason is the only oracle given you by heaven, and you are answerable not for the rightness but uprightness of the decision.

Atheism, demonism and Christianity and the true religion: deism.

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THOMAS JEFFERSON to Dr. Price
Paris, January 8, 1789.

I concur with you strictly in your opinion of the comparative merits of atheism and demonism, and really see nothing but the latter in the Being worshipped by many who think themselves Christians.

The clergy (is)... against the civil and religious rights of man.

THOMAS JEFFERSON to Jeremiah Moor
Monticello, August 14, 1800.

It is the incapacitation of a clergyman from being elected. The clergy, by getting themselves established by law, and ingrafted into the machine of government, have been a very formidable engine against the civil and religious rights of man. They are still so in many countries and even in some of these United States.

THOMAS JEFFERSON to Doctor Benjamin Rush
Monticello, September 23, 1800

I promised you a letter on Christianity, which I have not forgotten. On the contrary, it is because I have reflected on it, that I find much more time necessary for it than I can at present dispose of. I have a view of the subject which ought to displease neither the rational Christian nor Deists, and would reconcile many to a character they have too hastily rejected. (He is trying to develop a form of religion which would be pleasing to the rational Christians, for example, Unitarians and also to Deists.)

...and they [the Clergy] believe that any portion of power confided to me, will be exerted in opposition to their schemes. And they believe rightly; for I have sworn

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upon the altar of god, eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man.

THOMAS JEFFERSON to Joseph Priestly
Washington, March 21, 1801

Those who live by mystery and 'charlatanerie' [traditional Christianity], fearing you would render them useless by simplifying the Christian philosophy, - the most sublime and benevolent, but most perverted system that ever shone on man....

THOMAS JEFFERSON to Moses Robinson
Washington, March 23, 1801.

... the Christian religion, when divested of the rags in which they have enveloped it, and brought to the original purity and simplicity of its benevolent institutor, is a religion of all others most friendly to liberty, science, and the freest expansion of the human mind. [Jefferson believed that the gospel writers altered the actual deist views of Jesus. Here, Jefferson is referring to this original Jesus.]

THOMAS JEFFERSON
to Messrs. Nehemiah Dodge, Ephraim Robbins, and Stephen S. Nelson, A committee of the Danbury Baptist Association, in the State of Connecticut.
Washington, January 1, 1802.

Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between man and his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legislative powers of government reach actions only, and not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should "make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise

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thereof," thus building a wall of separation between Church and State.

THOMAS JEFFERSON to Joseph Priestly
Washington, April 9, 1803.

The ancient pagan philosophers versus Jefferson's Jesus, and pure deism.

While on a short visit lately to Monticello, I received from you a copy of your comparative view of Socrates and Jesus, and I availed myself of the first moment of leisure after my return to acknowledge the pleasure I had in the perusal of it....

I have reflected often on it since, and even sketched the outlines in my own mind. I should first take a general view of the moral doctrines of the most remarkable of the ancient philosophers, of whose ethics we have sufficient information to make an estimate, say of Pythagoras, Epicurus (the Atheist), Epictetus, Socrates, Cicero, Seneca, Antoninus. I should do justice to the branches of morality they have treated well; but point out the importance of those in which they are deficient. [For the relationship between the ancient Greco-Roman philosophy and the New Testament, see our book, *Jesus Christ: A Pagan Myth: Evidence That Jesus Never Existed*. Note, Jefferson's admiration of the ancient pagan philosophers, especially the atheist, Epicurus, and the Stoics, Seneca and Marcus Aurelius, who did not believe in a personal god.] I should then take a view of the deism (!) and ethics of the Jews, and show in what a degraded state they were, and the necessity they presented of a reformation.

I should proceed to a view of the life, character, and doctrines of Jesus, who sensible of incorrectness of their ideas of the Deity, and of morality, endeavored to bring

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them to the principles of a pure deism, and juster notions of the attributes of God, to reform their moral doctrines to the standards of reason, justice and philanthropy, and to inculcate the belief of a future state. This view would purposely omit the question of his divinity, and even his inspiration. To do him justice, it would be necessary to remark the disadvantages his doctrines have to encounter, not having been committed to writing by himself, but by the most unlettered of men [The Gospel writers] , by memory, long after they had heard them from him; when much was forgotten, much misunderstood, and presented in very paradoxical shapes. Yet such are the fragments remaining as to show a master workman, and that his system of morality was the most benevolent and sublime probably that has been ever taught, and consequently more perfect than those of any of the ancient philosophers.

THOMAS JEFFERSON to Edward Dowse
Washington, April 19, 1803.

[The pagan philosophers deserve a high degree of merit as to moral precepts.]

I must also add that though I concur with the author in considering the moral precepts of Jesus as more pure, correct, and sublime than those of the ancient philosophers, yet I do not concur with him in the mode of proving it. He thinks it necessary to libel and decry the doctrines of the (pagan) philosophers; but a man must be blinded indeed by prejudice, who can deny them a great degree of merit.

THOMAS JEFFERSON to Doctor Benjamin Rush
Washington, April 21, 1803.

[“I am a Christian” Jefferson means that he accepts Jesus as the perfect moral teacher.]

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To the corruptions of Christianity I am indeed opposed; but not the genuine precepts of Jesus himself. I am a Christian, in the only sense he wished any one to be; sincerely attached to his doctrines, in preference to all others; ascribing to himself every human excellence; and believing he never claimed any other. [Jefferson believes that Jesus did not claim to be divine.]

I am moreover averse to the communication of my religious tenets to the public; because it would countenance the presumption of those who have endeavored to draw them before that tribunal, and to seduce public opinion to erect itself into that inquisition over the rights on conscience, which the laws have so justly proscribed.

[Jefferson indicates the kind of legal and social pressure an atheist or deist is exposed to if he or she reveals unorthodox religious views. He refers to Christian persecution of nonbelievers several times in his letters.]

Syllabus of the Doctrines of Epicurus

In 1803 Jefferson composed a syllabus of the comparative merits of Christianity. He let only a few see it, including Benjamin Rush in 1803 and William Short in 1820. When Rush died in 1813, Jefferson asked the family to return the document to him. In the syllabus, Jefferson outlines what he considers to be some of the advantages of Jesus' teachings. In the 1820 letter to Short, he makes it clear that he disagrees with some of those teachings.]

Syllabus of an Estimate of the Merit of the Doctrines of Jesus, Compared with those of Others.

April, 1803

In a comparative view of the Ethics of the enlightened nations of antiquity, of the Jews and of

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Jesus, no notice should be taken of the corruptions of reason among the ancients, to wit, the idolatry and superstition of the vulgar, nor of the corruptions of Christianity by the learned among its professors.

Let a just view be taken of the moral principles inculcated by the most esteemed of the sects of ancient philosophy, or of their individuals; particularly Pythagoras, Socrates, Epicurus [the atheist], Cicero, Epictetus, Seneca, Antoninus. [Note, the inclusion of the atheist, Epicurus, and others who did not believe in a personal God.]

Still less have they [pagan philosophers] inculcated peace, charity and love to our fellow men, or embraced with benevolence the whole family of mankind. [Jefferson ignores the Brotherhood of Man which is the central tenet of Stoicism.]

II. Jews. 1. Their system was Deism; that is, the belief of one only God. [Yes, but surely Jefferson must have known that most pagan philosophers believed in only one God. Also, the Jewish God was a personal God as opposed to the impersonal god of the deists.] But (the Jews') ideas of God and of his attributes were degrading and injurious. [Like many atheists, deists and Christians, Jefferson arrives at this conclusion by reflecting only on the more primitive, vulgar, brutal aspects of the Hebrew scriptures.]

... the committing to writing [of Jesus'] life and doctrines fell on the most unlettered and ignorant men [the Gospel writers]; who wrote, too, from memory, and not till long after the transactions had passed.

III. Jesus. In this state of things among the Jews, Jesus appeared. His parentage was obscure; his condition poor; his education null; his endowments

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great; his life correct and innocent: he was meek, benevolent, patient, firm, disinterested, and of the sublimed eloquence. [Jefferson arrives at this romanticized view of Jesus, as modern Christian writers do, by omitting the negatives traits of Jesus in the Gospels by assuming they are additions by later writers. In the Jefferson Bible Jesus is, of course, a reflection of Thomas Jefferson's moral values.]

4. Hence the doctrines which [Jesus] really delivered were defective as a whole, and fragments only of what he did deliver have come to us mutilated, misstated, and often unintelligible.

5. They have been still more disfigured by the corruptions of schismatizing [Christian] followers, who have found an interest in sophisticating and perverting the simple doctrines he taught by engraving on them the mysticisms of a Grecian sophist, frittering them into subtleties, and obscuring them with jargon, until they have caused good men to reject the whole in disgust, and to view Jesus himself as an impostor. [Thus, Jefferson rejects that portion Gospels which any good deist or ethical atheist would reject, thus turning Jesus and to a deistic humanist.]

[Moral Doctrines of Jefferson's Jesus]

2. [Jesus'] moral doctrines, relating to kindred and friends, were more pure and perfect than those of the most correct of the philosophers, and greatly more so than those of the Jews; and they went far beyond both in inculcating universal philanthropy, not only in kindred and friends, to neighbors and countrymen, but to all mankind, gathering all into one family under the bonds of love, charity, peace, common wants and common aids. A development of this head will evince the peculiar superiority of the system of Jesus over all

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others. [He ignores the highly developed ethics of the Stoics which emphasized the importance of doing good to all of humanity.]

4. [Jesus] taught, emphatically, the doctrines of future state, which was either doubted, or disbelieved by the Jews; and wielded it with *efficacy, as an important incentive*, supplementary to the other motives to moral conduct. [The atheists and most of the closet atheists (deists) believed in neither heaven nor hell. Jefferson, among other non-believers, thought a belief in future life was useful as regards encouraging morality among the masses. Here, he attributes to Jesus the same view, “wielded it with *efficacy, as an important incentive.*” Fear of Hell will cause the masses to behave in a more moral manner, a common belief among ancient pagans and Christians.]

THOMAS JEFFERSON to Dr. Benjamin Rush
Washington, April 23, 1803.

At length I send you a letter long due and even now but a sketch of what I wished to make it. But your candor will find my just excuse in the indispensable occupations of my public duties. I communicated a copy of the syllabus to Dr. Priestly in hope he will extend his work of Socrates and Jesus Compared. He views a part of the subject differently from myself, but in the main object of my syllabus we go perfectly together. [Indeed, Dr. Priestly's *Socrates and Jesus Compared* is similar to the Jefferson Bible and his letters. Both books remove all miracles and supernatural phenomena from the Gospels, leaving Jesus as an ideal deist ethical teacher.]

Christian Deism and Unitarianism

Jefferson might have been an atheist but he, like Priestly, felt that a radically transformed Christianity

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was necessary to ensure public morality. Thomas Paine, a close associate of Jefferson, rejected Christianity but sought to recover the original pure Deism (though he was careful to give lip service to Jesus, as the ethical teacher). Jefferson and Priestly thought that a reformed Unitarianism might be the way of the future since it was contaminated with less superstitious dogma like the virginal conception etc. Later in his life, Paine co-founded his own “pure” deist Church.

THOMAS JEFFERSON to Thomas Leiper
Washington, January 21, 1809.

As to myself, my religious reading has long been confined to the moral branch of religion, which is the same in all religions (morals); while in that branch which consists of dogmas, all differ, all have a different set.

THOMAS JEFFERSON to Samuel Kercheval
Monticello, January 19, 1810.

(Only) ... a short time elapsed after the death of the great reformer of the Jewish religion [Jesus], before his principles were departed from by those who professed to be his special servants, and perverted into an engine for enslaving mankind, and aggrandizing their oppressors in church and state: that the purest system of morals ever before preached to man has been adulterated and sophisticated by artificial constructions, into a mere contrivance to filthy wealth and power to themselves: that rational men, not being able to swallow their impious heresies, in order to force them down their throats, they raise the hue and cry of infidelity, while themselves are the greatest obstacles to the advancement of the real doctrines of Jesus, and do, in fact, constitute the real Anti-Christ.

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THOMAS JEFFERSON to John Adams
Monticello, August 22, 1813.

Your approbation of my outline to Dr. Priestly is great gratification to me; and I very much suspect that if thinking men would have the courage to think for themselves, and speak what they think, it would be found they do not differ in religious opinions, as much as is supposed. I remember to have heard Dr. Priestly say that if all England would candidly examine themselves, and confess, they would find that Unitarianism was really the religion of all....

THOMAS JEFFERSON to John Adams
Monticello, January 24. 1814.

In the New Testament there is internal evidence that parts of it have proceeded from an extraordinary man; and that other parts are the fabric of very inferior minds. It is as easy to separate those parts, as to pick diamonds from dunghills. [The Christian scholars of the next two centuries did not find it so easy to zero in on the "real" historical Jesus which is why there are a few hundred books out there, each claiming to give you a picture of the authentic teachings of Jesus.]

THOMAS JEFFERSON to?
Poplar Forest near Lynchburg. June 13, 1814.

The Morality of Atheists

Some have made the love of god the foundation of morality. This too is but a branch of our moral duty, which are generally divided into duties to god, and duties to man. If we did a good act morally from the love of god, and a belief that it is pleasing to him, whence arises the morality of the Atheist? It is idle to say as

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some do, that no such being exists. We have the same evidence of the fact as of most of those we act on, to wit, their own affirmations, and their reasonings in support of them. I have observed indeed generally that, while in protestant countries the defection from the Platonic Christianity of the priests is to Deism, in Catholic countries they are to Atheism. Diderot, Dalembert, D'Holbach, Condorcet, are known to have been among the most virtuous of men. Their virtue then must have had some other foundation than the love of god. [Note, that here Jefferson rejects the ideas that atheists have no morals, and the idea that ethical values come are from God. He seems, like the atheist Epicurus, to think that they reflect the morals necessary for society to survive, like no killing, no stealing, etc.]

THOMAS JEFFERSON to Mrs. M. Harrison Smith
Monticello, August 6, 1816.

Religious Freedom

The priests indeed have heretofore thought proper to ascribe to me religious, or rather anti-religious sentiments, of their own fabric, but such as soothed their resentments against the act of Virginia for establishing religious freedom. They wished him to be thought an atheist, deist, or devil, who could advocate freedom from their religious dictations. But I have ever thought religion a concern purely between our God and our consciences, for which we were accountable to Him, and not to the priests. . I never told my own religion, nor scrutinized that of another. I never attempted to make a convert, nor wished to change another's creed. [Well, maybe not in public but in his private letters]

THOMAS JEFFERSON to Mathew Carey
Poplar Forest near Lynchburg, November 11, 1816.

JESUS AND PLATO ON HELL

You ask if I mean to publish anything on the subject of a letter of mine to my friend Charles Thompson? Certainly not. I write nothing for publication, and last of all things should it be on the subject of religion. On the dogmas of religion as distinguished from moral principles, all mankind, from the beginning of the world to this day, have been quarrelling, fighting, burning and torturing one another, for abstractions unintelligible to themselves and to all others, and absolutely beyond the comprehension of the human mind. Were I enter on that arena, I should only add a unit to the number of Bedlamites. Accept the assurance of my great esteem and respect.

“I too am an Epicurian” – Thomas Jefferson

THOMAS JEFFERSON to William Short
Monticello, October 31, 1819.

William Short (1759–1849) was Thomas Jefferson's private secretary when he was ambassador in Paris, from 1786 to 1789. [Wikipedia contributors, "William Short (American ambassador)," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*]

Jefferson had an intimate relationship with his private secretary for many years. If anybody had a knowledge of Jefferson's religious views it would be William Short.

As you say of yourself, I too am an Epicurian. [Epicurus was a materialist and an atheist despite his lip service to the gods who have no awareness of the existence of human beings.] I consider the genuine (not the imputed) doctrines of Epicurus as containing everything rational in moral philosophy which Greece and Rome have left us. Epictetus indeed, has given us what was good of the stoics; all beyond, of their dogmas, being hypocrisy and grimace. [We see Jefferson's admiration for the atheist,

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Epicurus. If Jefferson rejected atheism, it is odd to see that Jefferson puts an atheist above all other pagan philosophers as regards moral doctrines, even above the Stoics.] [The stoics'] great crime was in their calumnies [against] Epicurus and mis-representations of his doctrines; in which we lament to see the candid character of Cicero engaging as an accomplice.... Seneca is indeed a fine moralist, disfiguring his work at times with some Stoicisms, and affecting too much of antithesis and point, yet giving us on the whole a great deal of sound and practical morality. But the greatest of all the reformers of the depraved religion of his own country, was Jesus of Nazareth. [As for putting Jesus above Seneca as a teacher of morals, once again Jefferson is referring to the Jesus that remains once all "the dung " has been removed from the Gospels which had been corrupted by the evangelists, the gospel writers and others. Once again, we see Jefferson ignoring the humanism of the Stoics with their Brotherhood of Man, as well as other Greco-Roman pagan humanists. Even to this day we see atheists that hold on to the image of Jesus as an historical personage and a perfect moral teacher.]

I will place under this a syllabus of the doctrines of Epicurus, somewhat in the lapidary style, which I wrote some twenty years ago, a like one of the philosophy of Jesus, of nearly the same age, is too long to be copied.

Syllabus of the Doctrines of Epicurus. [Partial]

Physical. - The Universe eternal.

Its parts, great and small, interchangeable.

Matter and Void alone.

Motion inherent in matter which is weighty and declining.

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Eternal circulation of the elements of bodies.

Gods, an order of beings next superior to man, enjoying in their sphere, their own felicities; but not meddling with the concerns of the scale of beings below them.

Moral. - Happiness the aim of life.

Virtue the foundation of happiness....

[Most ancient and modern writers accept the fact that Epicurus was an atheist even though his text mentions the existence of gods out there somewhere in the cosmos, contemplating only themselves and having no relationship with human beings. In the case, even if Jefferson were not an atheist , he certainly rejects the idea of divine Providence, that is the view that God supplies all of our needs.]

THOMAS JEFFERSON to John Adams

Monticello, March 14, 1820.

Mr. Locke, you know, and other materialists, have charged with blasphemy the spiritualists who have denied the Creator the power of endowing certain forms of matter with the faculty of thought.

...I confess I should, with Mr. Locke, prefer swallowing one incomprehensibility rather than two. It requires one effort only to admit the single incomprehensibility of matter endowed with thought, and two to believe, first that of an existence called spirit, of which we have neither evidence nor idea, and then secondly how that spirit, which has neither extension nor solidity, can put material organs into motion. [Here, Jefferson takes an Epicurean, atheist or materialist position. He says we have no evidence of the existence of the spirit. He argues that non-matter or spirit could not cause material bodies to be moved.]

THOMAS JEFFERSON to William Short

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Monticello, April 13, 1820.

But while this syllabus is meant to place the character of Jesus in its true light, as no imposter himself, but a great reformer of the Hebrew code of religion, it is not to be understood that I am with him (Jesus) in all his doctrines. I am a materialist; he takes the side of spiritualism; he preaches the efficacy of repentance towards forgiveness of sin; I require a counterpoise of good works to redeem it. etc. [Jefferson states that he is a materialist [matter and space only] while Jesus is a spiritualist [both matter and spirit.]

That Jesus did not mean to impose Himself on mankind as the Son of God, physically speaking, I have been convinced by the writings of men more learned than myself in the lore. But that He might conscientiously believe Himself inspired from above, is very possible. The whole religion of the Jews, inculcated on him from his infancy, was founded in the belief of divine inspiration. [Jefferson denies the divinity of Jesus and asserts that Jesus did not claim to be Divine. He also denies the Jesus was divinely inspired but grants that Jesus may have believed that he was.]

Of this band of dupes and imposters, Paul was the great Coryphaeus, and first corrupter of the doctrines of Jesus. These palpable interpolations and falsifications of his doctrines, led me to try to sift them apart.

[Like many who followed him, Jefferson asserts that Paul's teachings are not compatible with those of Jesus. See our book *Jesus Christ: A Pagan Myth*]

THOMAS JEFFERSON to William Short
Monticello, August 4, 1820.

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That Jesus did not mean to impose Himself on mankind as the Son of God, physically speaking, I have been convinced by the writings of men more learned than myself in the lore. But that He might conscientiously believe Himself inspired from above, is very possible. The whole religion of the Jews, inculcated on him from his infancy, was founded in the belief of divine inspiration.

THOMAS JEFFERSON to Thomas Cooper
Monticello, August 14, 1820.

Although spiritualism is most prevalent with all these sects, yet with none of them, I presume, is materialism declared heretical. Mr. Locke, on whose authority they often plume themselves, openly maintained the materialism of the soul; and charged with blasphemy those who denied that it was in the power of an Almighty Creator to endow with the faculty of thought any composition of matter He might think fit. The fathers of the church of the three first centuries generally, if not universally, were materialists, extending it even to the Creator Himself; nor indeed do I know exactly in what age of the Christian church the heresy of spiritualism was introduced. [God has a body. Jefferson stated in an earlier letter that he is a materialist. The stoics too believed that God [Nature] and the soul were made of refined matter.]

To Thomas Jefferson from JOHN ADAMS
Quincy, September 24, 1821

Hundreds of millions of Christians expect and hope for a millennium in which Jesus is to reign for a thousand years over the whole world before it is burnt up.

You and I hope for splendid improvements in human society, and vast amelioration in the condition of

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mankind. Our faith may be supposed by more rational arguments than any of the former. [These sentences reflect Jefferson's strong belief in progress which he feels will bring about an increase in human happiness, a common value among freethinkers, deists and some atheists. This is also reflected in his letter to Dr. Waterhouse below]

THOMAS JEFFERSON to Doctor Benjamin Waterhouse
Monticello, June 26, 1822

The doctrines of Jesus are simple, and tend all to the happiness of man.

1. That there is one only God, and he all perfect.
2. That there is a future state of rewards and punishments.
3. That to love God with all thy heart and thy neighbor as thyself, is the sum of religion. These are the great points on which he endeavored to reform the religion of the Jews. But compare with these the demoralizing dogmas of Calvin.
 1. That there are three Gods.
 2. That good works, or love of our neighbor, are nothing.
 3. That faith is everything, and the more incomprehensible the proposition, the more merit in the faith.
 4. That reason in religion is of unlawful use.
 5. That God, from the beginning, elected certain individuals to be saved, and certain others to be damned; and that no crimes of the former can damn them; no virtues of the latter save.

THOMAS JEFFERSON to James Smith
Monticello, December 8, 1822.

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... I confidently expect that the present generation will see Unitarianism become the general religion of the United States.

Atheism and Calvin

Thomas Jefferson to John Adams
Monticello. April 11, 1823.

I can never join Calvin in addressing his god. He was an Atheist, I can never be; or rather his religion was Daemonism. If ever man worshipped a false god, he did. The being declared in his five points is not the God whom you and I acknowledge and adore, the Creator and benevolent governor of the world; but a daemon of malignant spirit. It would be more pardonable to believe in no god at all, than to blaspheme him by the atrocious attributes of Calvin. Indeed I think that every Christian sect gives a great handle to Atheism by their general dogma that, without a revelation, there would not be sufficient proof of the being of a god. Now one sixth of mankind only are supposed to be Christians: the other five sixths then, who do not believe in the Jewish and Christian revelation, are without a knowledge of the existence of a god! This gives compleatly a gain de cause to the disciples of Ocellus, Timaeus, Spinoza, Diderot and D'Holback.

[Here, we see, when writing to John Adams, Jefferson's attack on atheism. Once again we see the caution that Jefferson uses when writing to a Deist or an Orthodox Christian, etc. When Jefferson lived it was extremely risky to admit to being a Deist. But all but impossible to declare that one is an atheist. Even in the late nineteenth century when the great agnostic, Robert G Ingersoll lived, even denying the truth of the Bible was a criminal offense in some states. Indeed, he defended a man in court charged with this offense and lost the

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case. Jefferson was accused by some of being a deist which caused him a great deal of problems but if he was accused of atheism, he may not have become president. See below, his letter to John Adams, January 23, 1825.

Besides, Jefferson was quite pragmatic. People were far more likely to accept a Unitarianism- type religion than the much maligned philosophy of atheism which was widely thought to be amoral.]

The “Most-People-Know” Argument that God Exists

So irresistible are the evidences of an intelligent and powerful Agent that, of the infinite numbers of men who have existed through all time, they have believed, in the proportion of a million at least to Unit, in the hypothesis of an eternal pre-existence of a creator, rather than in that of a self-existent Universe. [Here his argument is weak since the vast majority of humans once believed that the earth is flat and that the sun went around the earth. However it does show how determined Jefferson was to create a kind of rational ethical system (religion) which might be widely accepted in time.]

Of the nature of God

Of the nature of this being [God] we know nothing. Jesus tells us that ‘God is a spirit.’ 4. John 24 but without defining what a spirit is ***greek*** Down to the third century we know that it was still deemed material; but of a lighter subtler matter than our gross bodies.

The Atheist and the Self-existent Universe

The Atheist here plumes himself on the uselessness of such a God, and the simpler hypothesis of a self-existent universe. The truth is that the greatest enemies to the doctrines of Jesus are those calling themselves the expositors of them [Christians], who

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have perverted them for the structure of a system of fancy absolutely incomprehensible, and without any foundation in his genuine words. And the day will come when the mystical generation of Jesus, by the supreme being as his father in the womb of a virgin will be classed with the fable of the generation of Minerva in the brain of Jupiter. But we may hope that the dawn of reason and freedom of thought in these United States will do away with all this artificial scaffolding, and restore to us the primitive and genuine doctrines of this the most venerated reformer of human errors. [Well, the divine Jesus, born of a virgin, is the central doctrine of Christianity; Jefferson was definitely not an orthodox Christian!]

Again, God has a body

** “God therefore, to whom the soul is similar, in consequences of its origin, is in reality corporeal; but He is incorporeal in comparison with so much heavier bodies.”

THOMAS JEFFERSON to George Thatcher
Monticello, January 26, 1824

[Even in his old age Jefferson would not agree to publish his views on religion.]

You press me to consent to the publication of my sentiments and suppose they might have effect even on Sectarian bigotry. But have they not the Gospel? If they hear not that, and the charities it teacheth, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead. Such is the malignity of religious antipathies that, although the laws will no longer permit them, with Calvin, to burn those who are not exactly of their Creed, they raise the hue and cry of Heresy against them, place them

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under the ban of public opinion, and shut them out from all the kind affections of society. I must pray permission therefore to continue in quiet during the short time remaining to me....

THOMAS JEFFERSON to Judge Augustus B. Woodward
Monticello, March 24, 1824.

The Human Soul Is Material.

Indeed, Jesus Himself, the Founder of our religion, was unquestionably a Materialist as to man. In all His doctrines of the resurrection, He teaches expressly that the body is to rise in substance.

THOMAS JEFFERSON to Major John Cartwright
Monticello, June 5, 1824.

Can one generation bind another, and all others, in succession forever? I think not. The Creator has made the earth for the living, not the dead. Rights and powers can only belong to persons, not to things, not to mere matter, unendowed with will. The dead are not even things. The particles of matter which composed their bodies, make part now of the bodies of other animals, vegetables, or minerals, of a thousand forms.
[No future life.]

To Thomas Jefferson from JOHN ADAMS
Quincy, January 23, 1825

Punishment for Blasphemy

We think ourselves possessed, or at least we boast that we are so, of liberty of conscience on all subjects and of the right of free inquiry and private judgement in all cases, and yet how far are we from these exalted privileges in fact. There exists, I believe, throughout the whole Christian world, a law which makes it blasphemy

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to deny, or to doubt the divine inspiration of all the books of the Old and New Testaments, from Genesis to Revelations. In most countries of Europe it is punished by fire at the stake, or the rack, or the wheel. In England itself, it is punished by boring through the tongue with a red-hot poker. In America it is not much better....

NOTES ON VIRGINIA - QUERY XVII

Religious Persecution under the Law

The poor Quakers were flying from persecution in England. They cast their eyes on these new countries as asylums of civil and religious freedom; but they found them free only for the reigning sect. Several acts of the Virginia assembly of 1659, 1662, and 1693, had made it penal in parents to refuse to have their children baptized; had prohibited the unlawful assembling of Quakers; had made it penal for any master of a vessel to bring a Quaker into the state; had ordered those already here, and such as should come thereafter, to be imprisoned till they should adjure the country; provided a milder punishment for their first and second return, but death for their third....

A Few More Founding Fathers and Other Notable Persons: Benjamin Franklin To Grant: From Joseph McCabe's *Dictionary*

Franklin, Benjamin, LL.D., F.R.S., (1706-1790). Franklin's distinction in science, for which he got the Copely Medal and membership of the English Royal Society, and political career are well known. The attempt of some religious writers to claim so distinguished an American for orthodoxy is quite absurd in the face of his Autobiography. He states plainly that he quit the Presbyterian Church and was for the rest of his life a Deist believing in a future life (pp. 185-188). "I

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have found Christian dogma unintelligible. Early in life I absented myself from Christian assemblies."

Washington, George (1732 - 1799), First President. Clerical writers are naturally unwilling to admit that he was a freethinker – a non-Christian theist – but, while the evidence of faith which they allege is of the flimsiest description, there is ample and solid proof of his heresy. Jefferson says that Morris, who was intimate with Washington, "often told me that General Washington believed no more of that system (Christianity) than he himself did." (*Memoir and Correspondence of T. Jefferson*, IV, p. 512). He quotes a Chaplain to Congress who said that when the clergy presented an address to the President at his retirement they pointed out in his acknowledgment he had not said a word that identified him with Christianity, and in a further reply "the old fox" evaded that point. In a sermon delivered at Albany and reported in the *Daily Advertiser* (Oct. 29, 1831), one of the chief ministers of the city said that "among all our presidents from Washington downward not one was a professor of religion," which gives us the clerical tradition on the question. It is true that while he was President he attended the Episcopal Church, but the rector, Dr. Abercrombie, told this preacher, Dr. Wilson (who says it in the same sermon), that Washington always left before the Communion and when the rector pointed this out ceased to attend any service that was followed by Communion. It is admitted that he did not send for or have a clergyman in his last hours; and the statement that he asked his family to "spend his last hour with his Maker" shows only that he believed in God, which nobody ever disputed. Some apologists give us the prayer he said when he was "alone with God," who must have let them into the secret. It cannot be disputed that he said in his will: "It is my express desire that my corpse may be interred in a private manner

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without parade or funeral oration.” Against all this the chief champion of the angels, Jared Sparks, who edited Washington’s writings nearly 40 years after his death, urges such matters as that Washington wrote a hymn when he was a boy of 13; that (being a Deist) he often spoke of “the Author of the Universe” that a granddaughter, who was still a child when Washington died, said he prayed every day in private (which Washington’s adopted daughter questioned and was, in any case, consistent with Deism); and that once or twice he spoke favorably of the Christian religion. The man is obviously a religious twister. He ignores decisive evidence in the very letters he edited – as when Washington speaks of “the professors of Christianity” (p. 404) or Bishop White says that he never saw him kneel at prayer or heard him speak about religion – and most of the evidence given above. The evidence is given on both sides in Franklin Steiner’s *The Religious Beliefs of our Presidents* (Haldeman Julius 1936) and Remsburg’s *Six Historic Americans*. See also several very candid works on Washington by Rupert Hughes.

Adams, John (1735-1826) Second President of the United States. He signed the Treaty of Tripoli, which began (article 11), “The Government of the United States is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion,” he continued, “The doctrine of the divinity of Jesus has made a convenient cover for absurdity.” The treaty was ratified by the Senate in 1797 without a single exception. His rejection of Christianity, which he professed to admire morally, runs all through his letters to Jefferson, of which there is a good selection edited by Welstach (1925), though it is better to read them in the original edition (1856). The correspondence of the two men, the most accomplished who ever rose to high political office in America – they freely quote Greek, Latin, Italian and French to each other – is very free and

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most interesting. The attempts of his grandson and a few others to represent Adams as a Unitarian is not honest. He was not even a very firm Deist. One letter he wrote to Jefferson (May 12, 1820), who says that its "crowd of skepticism" kept him awake at night, has been suppressed by the pious Unitarian grandson, but in another (January 17, 1820) he defines God as "an essence that we know nothing of" and says that the attempts of philosophers to get beyond this are "games of push pin." He calls the Incarnation an "awful blasphemy," and says of the First Cause "whether we call it Fate or Chance or God." He believed in personal immortality but admitted that he knew no proof of it. He was, he says in a letter of May 15, 1817, often "tempted to think that this would be the best of all possible worlds if there were no religion in it." His family fell away to respectable Unitarianism but his grandson Charles Francis Adams (1835-1915) the distinguished historian, was an Agnostic of the Leslie Stephen school, as is shown in the Life and Letters.

Madison, James (1751-1836), fourth President of the United States and a freethinker like his three predecessors. He learned Hebrew and made a thorough study of theology after graduating at Princeton and gave up his beliefs. He helped to draft the constitution of Virginia and insisted on it protecting religious freedom. He effectively protested against a proposal to make contributions to religion in that state compulsory and got state and Church completely separated. He was President 1809-1817. His letters in (*Writings of James Madison*, 9 vols., 1910) show all his life he opposed the Churches. In a letter of May 19, 1823, he insists that the university shall not become "an Arena of Theological Gladiators" (IX, 126). Apparently he was a theist but not with much depth of conviction. In a letter to a clergyman near the end of his life he wrote: "There

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appears to be in the nature of man what ensures his belief in an invisible cause of his present existence and an assurance of his future existence." This is hardly a personal profession of belief, and he is one of the few leading statesmen who did not adorn his speeches and letters with occasional references to God.

Lincoln, Abraham (1809-1865), 16th president. Many efforts have been made to prove that Lincoln was orthodox but, as in the case of Washington, the evidence on the side of the angels is strained or tainted while there is ample evidence that he was at the most a deist. His partner and intimate friend affirms it, and quotes the support of Mrs. Lincoln in his *Life of the President*. Colonel Lamon, another close friend who has written on him says emphatically: "He was not a Christian." General Colis, the chief claimant of orthodoxy, can say no more than that he attended a church (which is a common ailment of politicians) and spoke about God (as, of course, every deist does). Rankin, the second principal claimant of orthodoxy, mainly relies on an old woman's recollection of a conversation with Lincoln. The most impartial biographer, C. G. Leland (See), says that "as he grew older his intense melancholy and his emotional temperament inclined him towards reliance on an unseen power and belief in a future state" (p. 56) which is not far from agnosticism – and suggests that there is some political tinge in his public references to the deity. It is the way of all political flesh.

Grant, Ulysses Simpson (1822-1885), 18th President of the United States. Chief General in the Civil War and President 1868 to 1877. His principal biographer, Hamlin Garland (U.S. Grant, 1898) says that he "subscribed to no creed." (p. 522). The Rev. M.J. Cramer (U.S. Grant, 1898) trims. At one point he says that Grant "believed the fundamental doctrines of the Christian

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religion" – just as they often say that a freethinker is "a good Christian in the true sense" – at another that he only prayed "mentally" (he does not say that Grant told him), and finally that General Hallock rebutting the charge of swearing and drinking said that his sobriety was remarkable for "a man who is not a religious man." He was unconscious when he was baptized but unexpectedly recovered and said that he was surprised at what they had done. Joseph McCabe